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THE
HISTORY
OF
CHARLES WENTWORTH, Esq.
IN A
SERIES of LETTERS.

INTERSPERSED
With a Variety of IMPORTANT REFLECTIONS,
Calculated
To improve MORALITY, and promote the
ECONOMY of HUMAN LIFE.

V O L. I. 1286

Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper,
Utilium tardus provisor, prodigus Eris,
Sublimis, Cupidusque, & amata relinquere pernix.
Conversis Studiis, ætas animusque virilis
Querit opes & amiscitias, inservit honori.

HOR. ARS POETICA.

L O N D O N,
Printed for T. BECKET, in the STRAND.
MDCC LXX.

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T
BY THE
E D I T O R.

THE following Letters have been put into my hands with leave to add, expunge, or alter at pleasure; but whatever use I have made of this licence, I desire to be considered only as an *Editor*: A part of the history they contain is, as I am assured, founded in truth. — I mention this only to excuse some circumstances, which might have been considered as faults in a plan wholly fictitious.—The Letters are more re-

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

plete with sentiments than incidents, and with amiable than vicious characters: to some these circumstances may appear imperfections; to me they appear in a different light. Novels that merely entertain, merit no encouragement, because they divert the mind from more useful objects: but to make them a vehicle of instruction, under the mask of amusement, it is necessary that they be not too interesting. Wherever curiosity is greatly excited, the mind becomes impatient to know the final event, and every moral or instructive reflection, that may be interposed, suspends the gratification of its curiosity; and is, on that account, either read with disgust, or intirely passed over: of this I am assured, not only by my own
expe-

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experience, but by that of many others.

To those who may think the characters not sufficiently contrasted, I shall only observe, that the turpitude of vice is impaired, the more it is familiarized to the mind, and that every vicious character that is brought to our acquaintance, whether real or fictitious, affords an additional sanction for our own depravity, and abates our natural aversion from evil. A frequent conversation with virtuous objects, is the most powerful incentive to virtue; and those who require a contrast to any of these characters, may find it by their acquaintance in real life; without being encouraged to vice, by an erroneous opinion (drawn from fictitious cha-

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characters) of its universality. The characters themselves are diversified by few striking peculiarities. There have, perhaps, been more characters of this class drawn than have really existed, or can be of use to mankind. The principles of action, in men, are variable, uncertain, and often hid even from themselves, and their characters generally confounded, dissembled, or inconsistent; all the knowledge therefore that can be acquired on this subject by reading, will, when carried into real life, as often mislead as direct the understanding.— Neither are the Letters distinguished by the peculiarities of stile; because such peculiarities do not really exist among the polite, or learned part of mankind, who, in speaking, and writing,

BY THE EDITOR.

ing, are governed not so much by their own sentiments or judgment, as by the laws of decorum, ceremony, or fashion ; which from the servile obedience they receive, induce an apparent but fallacious similarity of character, sentiment and behaviour among us, and confound our real dispositions. All therefore that can be inferred from speculative letters, is the degree of knowledge and understanding of the writers.—The letters themselves are generally written in a stile, not confined by stiffness or formality, nor yet relaxed into that affected ease and carelessness, and that ridiculous familiarity of expression, which has lately been introduced, from an abuse of a rule which enjoined us “ to write as we would speak :”

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speak :" an injunction which, in itself, could never be justly applied to any but those whose manner of expression, in conversation, is unexceptionable; regularity in the arrangement of our ideas, and propriety of words in their expression, being always necessary, when they are delivered by writing.—The Notes are subjoined by the Editor.

THE

THE
HISTORY
OF
CHARLES WENTWORTH, ESQ.

LETTER I.

To Mrs. STANHOPE.

DEAR MADAM,

THE melancholy death of a brother, and the unhappy circumstances with which it has been attended, preclude the possibility of my visiting you at S—, agreeable to the promise you exacted from me at leaving London.—The intimate

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B

friendship

friendship with which you have honoured me, may perhaps excite your curiosity relative to an event, to me as afflicting as it is interesting: I shall therefore employ one of those vacant hours which grief and retirement afford, in communicating not only the circumstances immediately connected with the untimely death of the best of brothers, but the most material incidents of his life; from a persuasion, that the former will become more interesting by a previous knowledge of the latter.—We love to be led on in a gradual progress, to know the primitive condition and actions of individuals; and contemplate the various events which successively result from each other: this progress is similar to that of our nature, which gradually advances from the dawnings of infant being, to the mature intelligence of manhood.

Edward Wentworth, that brother, who is the melancholy subject of my present letter;

ter; and between whom and myself there ever subsisted the tenderest affection, had in his youth, while at the university of *Oxford*, contracted an intimate acquaintance with Mr. Compton, the youngest son of an honourable family: they were both designed for the profession of arms, and nature had liberally endowed each of them with all the advantages of genius, which they assiduously cultivated, to render themselves worthy of those honourable stations, to which a laudable ambition prompted them to aspire: a practice in general too much neglected by military gentlemen, who are more anxious for the acquisition of personal, than mental accomplishments.

— A similitude of dispositions and pursuits soon ripened their intimacy into the most perfect friendship. — Nearly at the same time each left the university, and soon after entered the army; in which they enjoyed equal rank, and not only maintained, but, if possible, increased their

friendship ; by their respective interests, I will not say merits, for that at present has but little influence in military promotions, they were each in a little time promoted to the rank of Captains. Soon after, Capt. Compton, whose conduct in every particular was dictated by integrity, honour, and politeness, commenced an acquaintance with Miss Henrietta Bilson, the youngest daughter of Henry Bilson, of —, Esq. a Lady whose uncommon beauty was her least perfection. The delicacy of her mind would not permit her to be indebted to the advantages of beauty, which, as she well knew, soon becomes indifferent by possession ; and as she aspired to a more rational and permanent happiness than could result from the temporary esteem of those, who have neither sense to discover, or prize any other than external charms, she exerted the most assiduous endeavours in acquiring every accomplishment requisite to obtain and preserve the esteem of men of real merit ;

merit; as the only means of deserving the happiness of an union connected by friendship and cemented by love.—Capt. Compton and Miss Bilson soon discovered, and were soon charmed with their mutual perfections; and the favourable sentiments which each entertained for the other, were soon ripened into the most ardent reciprocal passion.—Capt. Compton had ever entertained the greatest veneration for the matrimonial institution, not only as necessary to the order and government of society, but as a state the best calculated for the attainment of perfect, solid, and durable felicity; but while they were anticipating in imagination the joys of connubial bliss, Captain Compton received orders to embark with the regiment to which he belonged, which was ordered on an expedition against ——. As Captain Wentworth's regiment was garrison'd in Great Britain, both the lovers and friends found themselves under the necessity of submit-

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ing to a separation. Captain Compton believing that the society of his friend might prove an agreeable entertainment to the amiable Miss Bilson during his absence, introduced him to her with encomiums sufficient to inspire a favourable prepossession towards him; and her accomplishments, with the known passion which his friend entertained for her, were sufficient recommendations to his esteem.—It was with the greatest reluctance that Captain Compton submitted to this separation, short as his imagination represented it; but the calls of honour and his country were irresistible.—The lovers therefore parted in the most tender but reluctant manner, endeavouring to alleviate their present anguish, by the solacing hopes of that uninterrupted felicity which they promised themselves after a short interval. The friends next submitted to an affectionate separation, and Captain Compton directly joined his regiment, then ready for embarkation. After his departure,

ture, Miss Bilson and my brother endeavoured to divert their mutual anxiety in the society of each other, which every day became more engaging; Miss Bilson esteeming him for his similitude in sentiments, manners, and disposition to her absent lover; and her own personal and acquired accomplishments were abundantly sufficient to inspire him with the most favourable sentiments: their mutual esteem was, however, invariably confined within the limits of blameless friendship. But unhappily Captain Compton lived not to arrive at the place to which the armament was destined; the heat of a torrid climate rendering him a victim to a putrid bilious fever, which frequently rages with fatal violence between the Tropics.—It was difficult to determine whether Miss Bilson or Captain Wentworth most lamented this unhappy event; each mourned with silent grief, and endeavoured to afford the other that consolation they mutually refused.—Grief, however,

like other passions, has its period.—The balmy influence of time at length dissipated their sorrows, and their friendship, which 'till then had been truly Platonic, assumed a more tender but interested nature; and was refined into the most ardent love.—The transition from grief to love is easy and natural; and as the most rigid virtue could not censure their union as injurious to Captain Compton, after delaying it as long as respect to his memory required, their marriage was consummated.

In this state they enjoyed all the felicity which can result from the union of persons endowed with every perfection conducive to connubial bliss, and who make it their constant study to improve them to their mutual happiness. A son became the fruit of their love, and an additional tie to connect their union and perpetuate their felicity; the mother, by her tender care of their infant babe, became still dearer to the father;

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father; and in the end, the toilsome office was doubly recompensed by the pleasing returns of conjugal and filial affection.— Near two years had elapsed without interruption to their happiness, when Captain Wentworth, in his turn, found himself compelled to relinquish domestic felicity for the service of his country, being ordered to repair with his regiment to Germany. Mrs. Wentworth, who had experienced the fatal event of a former separation, formed no less terrible apprehensions of the present. These, however, were immature. Captain Wentworth assisted at all the military operations in Germany, during the then war, particularly at the memorable battle of Dettingen, where the Sovereign himself was present; and by his brave and prudent conduct acquired the reputation of a good officer, and obtained a Majority in an ancient regiment.—He continued in the service until the re-establishment of peace, which permitted his return to the enjoy-

ment of domestic happiness, for which absence had augmented his desire.—With pleasure I saw him revisit his friends, uncontaminated by the vices imputed to his profession, a *modest, rational, and moral soldier*, replete with good-humour, politeness, candour, and generosity of heart, which were his characteristic virtues, joined to the accomplishments peculiarly necessary to a military life, which had rendered him habitually obedient to governors, respectful to superiors, easy, frank, and friendly to equals, attentive and considerate to inferiors, though firm and inexorable in the exactation of their respective duties.

Not long after his joining the army, Mrs. Wentworth had been delivered of a second son; and the season of infancy being past, the fond father with pleasure succeeded to the delightful charge of their education, assuming himself the important office of their preceptor, and with assiduous care
instructing

instructing and forming their minds to virtue. Incessant were the exertions of paternal care and affection, in directing their education to objects the most conducive to their private happiness and utility to society; and as nature had endowed each of them with a happy conception, fertile imagination, retentive memory, and solid judgment, even in the early progress of life; and as they discovered an uncommon docility of disposition, and attention to instruction, he had the fairest prospect of seeing his endeavours crowned with happy success, a prospect which their opening virtues enlarged with their increasing years. The eldest was sober and sedate to an uncommon degree; in him every passion seemed obedient to the impulse of reason; he had none of those wild thoughtless appetites and desires, which I once thought inherent in youth. The disposition of the youngest was however directly opposite: he had an uncommon share of vivacity, and an impe-

tuosity of passions, too violent to submit to the controul of reason. But as his inclinations are not vicious, and he has an extensive fund of good nature; these qualities, joined to a large portion of filial love and reverence, have hitherto restrained his passions within the bounds of innocence:— The father was especially solicitous to implant and cultivate in their minds the principles of morality, to paint virtue in amiable colours, and convey adequate ideas of the dignity and pleasure resulting from conscious innocence and integrity. The children were all obedience to their parents, whose displeasure they dreaded, not from a fear of punishment, but of losing their esteem, which they valued above every thing else.—There is no fear so amiable as that which has its source in love; and it is this fear, with which parents should endeavour to inspire their children, as it produces the most happy effects. Shame, the great engine of education, was indeed

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occasionally employed; but without impairing its effects, by too frequent application: but manual correction was ever avoided, as tending to render children abject through fear; and exposing them to the danger of debasing themselves, by being rendered insensible to the dignity of human nature through the debasement of others: instead of manual correction, all his endeavours tended to excite in their minds a laudable ambition, and a virtuous emulation, and to govern in love rather than fear. There is however no plan of education which ought to be indiscriminately adopted; and I am far from being convinced, that the method pursued by my brother was in every respect suitable to the disposition of the younger, though it was excellently adapted to that of the elder of his children; and if ever the former falls into any considerable errors in life, I am persuaded they will arise from an excess of that native pride, vivacity, and impatience,

which

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which are excellent ingredients in the composition of a virtuous mind; but require to be diminished, and impaired to a due proportion when ever they exceed the happy mean.

From the amiable docility of the children, and the unremitting endeavours of their parents to perfect their education, what happy effects might have been expected, had not the father been fatally diverted from this agreeable employment, before the eldest had attained the age of sixteen; about which time business called Major Wentworth to London, where he happened to pass an evening in company with several officers with whom he served abroad: the bottle circulated with rapidity, and his retired and temperate manner of life rendered him inordinately susceptible of its influence.—A dispute unhappily arose concerning some of the military operations in Germany during the preceding war, which

which was maintained with great warmth; and a young officer peremptorily contradicting my brother, on a fact which he asserted from his own knowledge, and in a provoking insolent tone, he was so irritated at the provocation, that he imprudently gave him the *lie*.—The consequence is too obvious to require explanation—Major Wentworth had ever entertained the greatest aversion for the practice of duelling.—To take the life of another, to revenge an accidental trifling affront, to him appeared not only a criminal violation of the laws of his country, but an impious offence against the Deity. He therefore became instantly sensible of the extent of his imprudence, which he acknowledged; declaring himself sorry therefore, and begging the officer to pardon it as the effect of intemperance.—This satisfaction would have been sufficient for a man of true bravery, but unfortunately his antagonist's courage had before suffered a disadvantageous im-
putation,

putation, and the conscience of its justice suggested the necessity of retrieving his honour by a signal act of rashness.—A challenge was therefore the consequence.—To what end do our martial laws prohibit challenges, yet absurdly punish the refusal of them? There is an inconsistency in this proceeding which I cannot reconcile to the principles of reason, or even of martial policy; but which reduced the unfortunate Mr. Wentworth to the cruel alternative, either of accepting the challenge, or abandoning the service. Sensible as he was of the dangerous consequences of the former expedient, and of the inequality of an engagement, in which even success must be attended with perpetual exile; he was yet tenacious of the *honour of a soldier*, and after having justly acquired the reputation of a brave officer, to be censured as unworthy to serve his king and dismissed with the imputation of cowardice, was to a man of his sensibility an indignity more dread-

dreadful than death: in this distraction of mind, after accepting the challenge, he employed a friend to mediate a reconciliation; but as no honourable concessions would procure it, they met madly to risk their lives on a decision in which justice has no influence, and which exposes the victor to a fate no less unhappy than that of the vanquished.—The evening preceding their meeting, he wrote Mrs. Wentworth an account of the enterprize in which he had engaged, and of the reasons which had induced him to yield to the laws of an absurd custom, in opposition to the dictates of prudence and religion, by a letter in which the distraction of his mind was painted in lively and affecting colours: but, to avoid an unnecessary alarm, he gave such orders as were necessary to prevent its being dispatched, unless the dispute should terminate unfortunately; and having resolved never to become a murderer, he formed a design, by which he hoped to avoid

avoid the fatal consequences which might otherwise result from the ensuing event.—Pistols were the weapons chosen to determine their controversy, and the first fire fell to the challenger, which my brother received without harm ; and then discharged his own pistol into the air, flattering himself that the generosity of this proceeding would happily terminate the dispute.—In this however, he was mistaken—his antagonist by a second discharge gave him a mortal wound, and fled from the justice of his country to a neighbouring kingdom, where the horrors of a guilty conscience will however pursue, and incessantly torment him.

The unhappy victim to the folly of a Barbarian custom, lived but a few hours to prepare for an awful transition to an untried state.—You, my dear friend, who from your own happy experience, can form an adequate idea of the happiness which this

this unfortunate pair had before enjoyed, will conceive the affliction which this untimely separation created, better than I can possibly communicate it by words. The grief of my disconsolate sister though extreme, is however silent and submissive; and in no part of her life did she ever appear more amiable than on this trying occasion, when her extreme sensibility has not been able to extort one expression inconsistent with the dictates of humble piety and the most exemplary resignation. The afflicted children, though perhaps not fully sensible of the extent of their irreparable loss, deplore it however, with all the marks of sorrow, as extreme, though, perhaps less durable than that of their parent; young minds being ever susceptible of the deepest impressions, which are again effaced with greater facility than in those who have arrived to maturity.

Notwithstanding the affliction in which Mrs. Wentworth is at present immersed,

I flatter myself that a concern for the welfare of her children, will soon recall her attention to the affairs of life, to which at present she seems indifferent; and restore her that health which is now sensibly impaired.—Her own fortune of about six thousand pounds remains intire; this, with a pension which she may expect to obtain as the widow of a deserving officer, will with œconomy afford her a genteel support through life; and enable her to complete the education of her sons, and afterwards establish them in reputable professions.—I am now with Mrs. Wentworth, endeavouring to afford an afflicted family that consolation which my own grief requires; and which is augmented by the melancholy objects around me, reflecting their mutual sorrow to each other.—

I fear I have tired your patience with this tedious narrative, which has been extended beyond the limits I at first proposed, by the pleasure I receive in dwelling

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ling on the affairs of a family so dear to me.

There is oft found an avarice in grief,
And the wan eye of sorrow loves to gaze,
Upon its secret hoard of treasur'd woes.

MASON.

As the summer is nearly elapsed, and the period of your residence in the country approaches, I shall defer the communication of several particulars relating to my private concerns, till I have the pleasure of seeing you in town with the amiable Sophia, to whom I must beg you will make my affectionate compliments, and do me the justice to believe that I am with inviolable friendship,

Dear Madam,

Your most affectionate
and most devoted servant.

H—
Oct. 10. 1756.

HARRIOT CLINTON.

To

LETTER II.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

DEAR CHARLES,

SINCE your departure from hence your brother has been entered a student of _____ college in Cambridge, to qualify himself for Holy Orders, agreeable to his former intention ; and want of fortune will render it necessary for you likewise to embrace some profession useful to society, by the industrious discharge of which you may be able to acquire a decent subsistence in life ; this, if you judge rightly, will by no means appear a hardship ; the wants of nature and the labour and industry by which alone they can be satisfied, render it impossible that all should lead a life of idleness, or, what is the same thing, employ themselves to no useful purpose : this is permitted only to a few, who, by the unequal distribution of for-

tune, are elevated to a state of ease and affluence. But believe me, my son, as I regard your happiness, I do not wish to see you in the number of these envied few, whose obligation to beneficence is augmented with their ability, whilst their disposition is perverted by the powerful allurements to vicious pleasure, for which riches afford the means of enjoyment ; but without any accession of happiness : no, my son, instead of seeing you augment the number of useless members in society, I would rather see that number diminished, as every individual of which it is composed is a burthen on the state, which ought to consist of members who are all above want, but not above the laudable exercise of those powers which God and nature designed for action. Chuse therefore, my son, some useful profession, agreeable to your capacity and disposition ; in your choice you may be allowed to aspire to one which is both genteel and liberal ; as with œconomy, I

flatter

flatter myself, I shall be able to support and establish you therein; and there are but few, or perhaps none, to which your preparatory education is inferior: indeed the mode in which you have been educated would have been preposterous, had the case been different; since the good, the true education is that which is conformable to our circumstances, and the state to which we ought to confine ourselves in life; every other being fit only to inspire vanity and a contempt for our proper sphere of action, or to create desires and appetites for objects above our power of attainment or capacity for enjoyment, and consequently to render us unhappy; and perhaps nothing has proved a more fertile source of misfortunes to mankind than the mistaken conduct of those, who, from an absurd education, the immoderate ambition of their parents, or their own natural vanity, are led to aspire to a sphere of life too elevated for their condition; and after expending

both

both time and fortune in fruitless pursuits, see themselves disappointed in their attempts, and consigned to future indigence and misery.—In determining on your future employment in life, you may be allowed to regard not only its utility and reputation, but even its attendant profit; as an industrious endeavour for the acquisition of wealth is laudable, when it aims at competency and a fund for the exercise of generosity and beneficence towards mankind. Indeed all employments which are useful to society ought to be both honourable and profitable; and the wisdom of that Emperor of China, who with his imperial hands tilled a field, thereby to render agriculture respectable to his people, can never be too much applauded. But the practice of modern times has absurdly rendered arts profitable and reputable in proportion to their inutility; and for this obvious reason, that the professors of unnecessary arts are employed only by the rich, and

consequently paid with the greatest liberality. But let not a sollicitude for the acquisition of wealth engage you in any pursuit which will not afford the interior satisfaction resulting from the conscience of doing good; this, my son, is of no small importance, as I am certain that a virtuous and benevolent mind cannot be happy in deriving a support from the exercise of a profession pernicious, or even useless to society. I cannot but lament my own incapacity to advise you properly on a subject, which requires an extensive knowledge, and an intimate acquaintance with life. To the cares of a mother, Providence has added the duties of a father, to which I am very unequal; and not only on this, but on a variety of future occasions, you will experience the extent of the loss you have sustained by the untimely death of the best of parents. Happy shall I be, if I can in any degree repair this loss by an unremitting attention to your interest and

happiness,

happiness, and by an incessant endeavour to promote them, exerted with all the ardour of maternal affection.

I have wrote to your uncle Wentworth to advise you on this subject, and hope his opinion will have its proper influence in your determination.—If I had sufficient confidence in my own judgment, to wish you to yield a submission thereto, I would recommend the *law* to your choice, as a profession in which merit has the fairest chance of rising into eminence, and which affords an extensive sphere of beneficence. How many may receive important benefits from an able and honest lawyer?—By this however, I mean but to intimate my imperfect opinion, and not to prescribe to your choice, which ought ultimately to be determined by your own disposition or aptitude to a particular pursuit, corrected by the information and advice of your friends.

It is now time, my son, to finish your visits to your uncle, and enter on a different scene of life; take therefore his advice, and consult your own inclination and judgment on my present proposal, and let me know your resolution, not with precipitation, but without unnecessary delay; and assure yourself that I shall invariably conform to your wishes, in every thing which can promote your well-fare.

I am,

Dear Charles,

Your most affectionate mother.

H—
Dec. 9. 1756.

HENRIETTA WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER III.

To Mrs. WENTWORTH.

HONOURED AND DEAR PARENT,

I Have maturely considered the subject you have been pleased to recommend to my attention, and hope for your pardon when I inform you, that notwithstanding the profound respect which I shall ever entertain for your superior judgment, I cannot in every particular reconcile my own sentiments to those which you are pleased to communicate, for my direction in the choice of a profession; and in spite of my inclination to conform to your opinion, I feel an insuperable aversion to the study of the law; as disagreeable, endless, intricate, and finally terminating in doubt and uncertainty; as a study which depends on an absurd mode of reasoning, from pre-

carious, and often contradictory authorities, a mode which is happily exploded in every other science ; and as a study which having for its object the decision of pecuniary controversies, inspires too great a sensibility to the value of wealth, and mechanically converts the mind to an habitual disposition to avarice : by this I do not mean a reflection on the professors of the law, among whom there are many persons of extended benevolence ; I doubt not, however, but even their humanity would have been more extensive, had they pursued a different employment : to this let me add, that the law in its present perversion, is a profession that subsists by the crimes and injustice of mankind, and which necessarily compels its professors to descend to many illiberal artifices, and practice a variety of litigious arts, to perplex judicial proceedings, involve truth in obscurity, confound the distinctions between *right* and *wrong*, and obstruct the administration

stration of justice. To all these objections, I must add, that I cannot think that I have any right to presume on success in the practice of the law; many great estates and dignified titles have indeed been derived from this profession; but such is its present state, that without great friends, or advantageous connections, no abilities, however great, will elevate their possessor to any degree of eminence.—I have consulted my uncle on this subject, agreeably to your injunction; and all the objections which I have just enumerated, have been confirmed by the sanction of his opinion.—I shall now beg leave to communicate my own sentiments and inclination, which lead me particularly to surgery, a profession, which indeed does not afford the most extensive progressions in the road of rank and fortune, but is sufficiently liberal and genteel; and of all others the most useful to mankind, having for its end the noblest of all objects, that of alleviating the mi-

series, incident to humanity. However, if this my choice should not receive your approbation, I shall endeavour to convert my own opinion to a conformity with yours; and by an affectionate submission to your determination on this and every future occasion, approve myself,

Honoured and dear parent,

Your most dutiful

and obedient son,

Dec. 16, 1756.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

DEAR SON,

YOUR letter I have received, and though I do not think your objections to the practice of the law are perfectly just, yet I am sensible it is at present so much perverted from the original end of its institution, that they have some degree of pertinence, and am happy in finding you are actuated by such rational and virtuous motives, as those which have determined you to the choice of surgery, which has my intire approbation; as it never shall be my error to compel you to any pursuit from which you profess an aversion; or oppose your choice, unless it be indeed very exceptionable.— I have wrote to your uncle on this subject, and

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desired

desired him to take the trouble of writing to Mr. — senior, principal surgeon to — hospital, and a gentleman of the greatest eminence in his profession; to know the terms on which he will receive you as his pupil, which will doubtless be expensive. I shall therefore expect your return in a day or two, after the receipt hereof, to provide for your new establishment,

And am,

Dear son,

Your most affectionate mother.

H—,
Dec. 20, 1736.

HENRIETTA WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER V.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

YOUR letter *, dear Charles, which I yesterday received, informs me of your safe arrival in London, and happy settlement in the family of your preceptor.—Thus far your progress is fortunate, but the greatest dangers are yet to be encountered.—Educated under the auspicious tutelage of a vigilant father, in a happy seclusion from the participation and even knowledge of vice, gaiety, and pleasure, your morals have been preserved uncorrupted; but you are now entered on a different stage, and that very seclusion which was your former security, will now become a source of danger by giving to

* This letter does not appear.

vice the charms of novelty.—When I reflect on your inexperience in life, the violence and impetuosity of your passions, and the various allurements to vicious pleasure, with which you are surrounded in your new situation, where luxury is adorned with every artificial grace, where the glare of vice and fashion combine to captivate the fancy and stimulate the senses, and where pleasure incessantly spreads her silken but delusive charms to inflame the innocent and sooth the guilty, can I but feel an anxious diffidence of the safety of your morals?—Recall to your memory the precepts which I gave you the evening before your departure, for the regulation of your conduct, and let them be imprinted on your mind in indelible characters; and in your progress through life, let it be the rule of your conduct, to pursue, with undeviating rectitude, the paths of innocence and virtue; by this you will elevate yourself above the power of

adverse

adverse fortune, and in every afflicting vicissitude of life, find within yourself a source of consolation, which can only result from the consciousness of innocence, and integrity in thought and action. By this, also, you will render yourself superior to the wanting of that artifice and falsehood, so frequently practised to the disgrace of humanity; for what temptation has that man to lie, who has no vice to conceal, no misconduct to palliate or excuse? Act therefore with probity and benevolence on every occasion, and, however you may be depressed by the unavoidable misfortunes of life, you will yet be happy. This is indeed a precept frequently delivered, and often without meaning; but I now repeat it from my own feelings and experiences in life; as it promises nothing less than the security of your happiness, with which my own is inseparably connected: bear it then in your mind with that constancy, which

its importance, and the affection from which it proceeds, deserve.

However, blameless your own conduct may be, you will nevertheless be necessarily exposed to some disagreeable circumstances in life, arising either from unavoidable accidents, or from the misconduct of others; but this is an inconvenience which may be in a great measure obviated, by habituating your mind to look on every object in a pleasing light; by which almost every circumstance may be rendered agreeable, or at least tolerable; as there is no object that has not some beauties, some advantages, to compensate its evil and deformity. There are many, however, who make it the business of their lives to discover faults in every circumstance, and in every enjoyment; and with this fastidious delicacy judge and condemn, without discrimination; and as the jaundiced eye gives its dis-

distempered tint to every object, so their indignant fancy sees defects, where they are indiscernible by true taste or reason, and thus creates a fruitful source of unhappiness. But do you, my son, improve the œconomy of life, by cultivating that disposition which I have now recommended, and promote your own happiness by fixing your attention on the most agreeable qualities, in the different objects by which you are surrounded ; not reflecting on their faults, especially those of your neighbours, only so much as is necessary to prevent your suffering by them. Every thing in nature has a fair side ; let this be kept constantly in view, and it will necessarily render every object agreeable, or at least obviate its evils : even under misfortunes, we may derive consolation by reflecting on the benefits which they may ultimately produce ; and as we can neither change our destinies, nor amend the dispositions of mankind, it is wise to make the best of both ;

both; to bear the evil with patience, and enjoy the good with prudence, and gratitude; and as often as the faults or follies of mankind offend us, to consider that we are like to them, and extend that indulgence to others which our own imperfections require.

I am now, my dear Charles, immersed in painful solitude, to which, till of late, I have been a stranger: to the loss of conjugal felicity, and the yet recent affliction which the unhappy fate of your father created, is now added the anxiety which must naturally arise from your and your brother's absence: to see myself in a few months secluded from the society of all those dear individuals, who were the instruments of my former domestic happiness, and consigned to my present solitude, is an afflicting spectacle; but my present seclusion is necessary for your and your brother's prosperity in life, to which my

partial

partial convenience shall never become an obstacle. The uneasiness of solitude may however be in some degree dissipated by a constant epistolary intercourse; but it must not be formal and constrained on your part, as it would then afford me but little pleasure. The free and candid communication of innocent thoughts and actions, (and such I hope yours will ever be) can only afford me that amusement which I desire, and is in no particular incompatible with filial respect, or those principles which have regulated my conduct towards you; and which ever inclined me to temper the severity of maternal authority, by the complacency of friendship. Consult me therefore with a decent freedom, and the confidence of a friend, on all occurrences which can properly be submitted to the cognizance of a parent, (and I hope you will seldom be engaged in those which are not of this nature), that by my advice

and

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and instructions, I may be enabled to assist you in your progress through the mazes of life.

I am, dear Charles,
with all the ardour of maternal affection,
Yours, &c.

H—
Jan. 20, 1757.

HENRIETTA WENTWORTH

LETTER

LETTER VI.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

THE post that brought me your letter *, my dear son, was likewise the bearer of one from Mr. S—, on the same subject.—It is with the most sensible affliction my child, that I am informed by these letters, of the continuance of your disagreement with your preceptor, which for some time, I flattered my self, had finally subsided ; and which, if it continues, will necessarily disappoint all my hopes of your successful progress in the profession which

* I have before me several preceding letters between Mr. C. Wentworth, his mother, and eldest brother ; but as their insertion is not necessary for understanding the present history, I have omitted them, lest I might too soon disgust my readers, by that morality with which some of them are replete ; as I well know, that the disposition of the present age renders it necessary for a writer to profess amusement, whilst he aims at instruction.

you

you have chosen, and consequently render me and yourself unhappy. Mr. S—— does not indeed enumerate the particulars of your misconduct, but charges you in general terms, with an irregular life, and ill behaviour, and disrespect to his family, and desires me to exert my influence for your reformation. You are sufficiently instructed, my son, in the duty you owe him; and I conjure you by the obedience and affection you have hitherto shewn me, and by the consideration of your own and my future happiness, to act agreeable thereto. I am willing to believe what you plead in your behalf, that this disagreement has been excited and continued by the artful misrepresentations of your fellow student; but as he is now gone, this will no longer be the case. Let me advise you therefore to acknowledge, in a suitable manner, your misbehaviour to Mr. S——, and desire his forgiveness, assuring him that you will for the future, endeavour to avoid every occasion of offence: an assurance which I
hope

hope your conduct will not falsify ; by this you will remove any prejudices he may have conceived to your disadvantage, and conciliate his future esteem ; which, I need not tell you, will be indispensably necessary to your setting out with advantage in life ; and I hope that neither your pride nor resentment will resist this step, as anger, in your present circumstances, will be like the resistance of a harmless insect which may accelerate its destruction, but cannot effect its relief. I would not, my son, wish you to prostitute the justice and respect due to yourself, by an abject submission to any person, however elevated, for the sake of any attendant advantage : but this has no relation to an acknowledgment of errors (which you have doubtless committed), and a promise of reformation, from a pupil to his preceptor ; nor can the most scrupulous, the most exquisite sense of honour oppose this measure, or oblige you to retaliate any provocations received from Mr. S—, or his family ; as I suspect you

are

are disposed to do, from the haughtiness and impetuosity of your temper, which you must strive to correct, as there are no greater obstacles to success in life, than pride and resentment in youth. As to that irregularity of life with which you are charged, it is what I have for some time feared. The sensible difference between your former and present letters ; the frequency, prolixity, candour, and ingenuity of the former, compared with the brevity, formality, restraint, and unfrequency of the latter, had before informed me, that either my share in your love and attention was diminished, or that your actions were become unfit for the cognizance of a virtuous parent. Afflicting suggestions ! — I do not require the particulars of your misconduct, nor do I wish to know them : I would rather admonish and reclaim you to your duty. Whatever may have been your errors they are irrevocable. Happy will it be for you if they suffice, or if the experience they may have afforded is sufficient

CHARLES WENTWORTH. 47

ficient for your amendment: reflect on the precept which I have already given you for the regulation of your manners, and security of your happiness; and may your future conduct afford me the pleasure of believing that they were not given in vain! To promote this and your reconciliation with Mr. S—, by the means I have already indicated, is the design of my present letter; and as I have hitherto experienced the most perfect obedience from you, I flatter myself with a continuance of it on this and every future occasion, when I shall require it, to promote your happiness; for which I shall ever wish, with all the solicitude that can result from that maternal love, with which

I am, my dear son,

Your most affectionate mother.

H—,
Dec. 11, 1760.

HENRIETTA WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

To Mrs. WENTWORTH.

HONOURED AND DEAR MOTHER,

IN obedience to your injunctions, I took the first opportunity of conversing with Mr. —— on the subject of our disagreement: I acknowledged that I had, through inadvertency rather than intention, justly incurred his displeasure, and that of his family, for which I professed myself truly sorry; and hoped that the folly and inexperience of youth would plead in my behalf, and obtain me his pardon, which I earnestly desired, and should endeavour to deserve hereafter: more than this I could not acknowledge with truth, which I know you would not have me violate. He seemed pleased with this concession, and gave me his pardon, promising that whatever had passed should on his part be buried in perpetual oblivion.

HISTORI

Thus,

Thus, my dear mother, we are in appearance reconciled: but it is not Mr. S—— so much as the family that I have offended; and whether this submission will be sufficient to appease their resentments I am uncertain. I cannot but acknowledge the prudence of those concessions to which you have engaged me; but, at the same time, I must confess, that it is not perfectly agreeable to my disposition to descend to such humiliating measures, to humour those who are disposed to be offended with little or no cause. However, I have resolved to endeavour, by the most obliging behaviour, to acquire their esteem, or at least to avoid their displeasure.

As to those irregularities with which I am charged, I beg you will do me the justice to believe them to be but the innocent effusions of youthful levity; which, I hope, will never afford a real

cause for the apprehensions you seem to entertain. You, indeed with some justice, complain of a difference between my former and later letters, which has been occasioned by an increase of my avocations, some of which are necessary, and all are harmless: I will, however, endeavour to give you less cause of complaint on this subject hereafter.—The interest you are pleased to take in my happiness, will ever be a most powerful incentive to my good conduct; and give me leave to assure you, that I shall ever endeavour, by every act of filial obedience, to approve myself

Honoured and dear mother,

Your most dutiful

and obedient son,

London,
Jan. 2, 1760.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

LETTER VIII.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

WELL, my dear Mentor, I have received your epistle, which I find almost as replete with morality as that of St. Paul to the Romans.—How has pleasure offended you, that you bear it such an insuperable enmity? People, when old and satiated, usually join in the cry of vanity; but for one so young to be so insensible to its allurements is really unnatural.—I once thought your gravity tolerable, but my acquaintance with the various amusements in this metropolis, every day renders it more and more insipid; and the little entertainment which your letters afford, is so unequal to my trouble in answering them, that unless I can convert our correspondence to *profit*, I believe I had better suffer it to lan-

guish.—Suppose I should collect your letters, which I believe would make about two volumes in quarto, and publish them under the title of *Serious and Important Reflections on Moral and Religious Subjects*; in a Series of Letters from an Elder to a Younger Brother; perhaps in this way they might enable me to purchase that entertainment which they want in themselves.

—I fear, however, upon reflection, that the booksellers would know their interest too well to purchase the *Copy-Right*, as the taste of the age, like my own, is so much refined, that subjects of this nature meet with but very little attention. However, an advantage might doubtless be obtained by selling them to some reverend divine, rendered indolent by a rich living, as a *Fund of Divinity*, from which he might extract admirable receipts, not for his own conduct, but that of his hearers.—With this view I will continue the correspondence, unentertaining

ing as it is : Though a more engaging employment forbids prolixity at this time.—As this hint may perhaps excite your curiosity, I will, in some degree, gratify it, that you may have a new subject for admonition. Know then, that the business which engrosses my present attention is no other than an assignation with a young beautiful object, whose sex you may easily guess, and whose prepossession in my favour, will authorise me to indulge very pleasing expectations.—Perhaps I may hereafter give you a more minute account of this object ; at present you must be content with knowing, that I first saw her at a place, where all who are admitted are not virtuous, in company with an elderly lady whom she called mother ; but being unattended by any gentleman, I thought this mother might have been occasionally adopted, and my suspicion was somewhat confirmed by the looks which we exchanged. They were,

D 3 however,

however, soon joined by a person who proved the brother of the daughter, and who prevented my addressing them as I otherwise should have done. I had the curiosity, however, to have them followed home, and afterwards found means to procure an introduction to the brother, of whose acquaintance I should not have been ambitious but for that of his sister; which I obtained without difficulty by the access he procured me.— I will, however, honestly confess that it gives me some uneasiness, to reflect that the pleasure which I expect from this new acquisition, must be purchased at the expence of, perhaps, her future happiness; but yet I cannot resolve to abandon this pursuit, or neglect the improvement of an opportunity so favourable to my desires. This want of resolution I know you will censure as unworthy of a moral agent. But consider, my dear brother, the constitutional difference in
our

our dispositions. In yours, a cold phlegmatic insensibility to pleasure may perhaps predominate; whilst in me every passion acts with irresistible violence. Let this consideration plead in my behalf, and abate the severity of those reproofs, which I expect from you on this subject. Give me some credit also on the score of our different situations. London, I assure you, has many allurements, to which you in Cambridge are not exposed; and resolutions, though easily made in solitude, where reason is not disturbed by dissipation, nor perverted by the false colourings of specious appearances, too frequently assumed by error; where the passions, unawakened by temptation, are dormant; and where example does not seduce to folly; such resolutions, I say, cannot be kept without difficulty amidst the hurry and pleasures of gay society.

My situation in the family with which I live, is somewhat more agreeable than what it has been of late; a submission which, to the mortification of my pride, I lately made, in compliance with our parent's injunction, has restored apparent tranquility: How long it will continue is uncertain; but if I may conjecture from my knowledge of their several dispositions, it will be of no long duration.

The time now approaches, when I shall be more happily employed than in writing you a letter which, I foresee, will draw on myself a torrent of admonitions; and a very tedious exposition on the heinous crime of fornication; which, with sabbath-breaking, I am told are the only sins in Scotland; but should I dispose of your letters in the manner I have proposed, a little common-place morality on this subject (which has hitherto escaped your animadversion) may be necessary to com-

CHARLES WENTWORTH. (57)

plete the *Fund of Divinity*, as our clergymen sometimes, for *decency's* sake, intermeddle with fornication in *public*.

But I will leave you to moralize on the sin, whilst I prepare for the pleasure which will result from its commission; and whilst you are engaged in natural philosophy, will retire to scenes of *experimental*, where the doctrine of mutual attraction will be duly observed, and reciprocally enforced, with all the ardour of youth and love; and have therefore only time to assure you, that, notwithstanding my raillery and the opposition of our dispositions,

I sincerely am

Your most affectionate

and most devoted brother,

London,
Feb. 20, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

LETTER IX.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

DEAR CHARLES,

YOU complain of my admonitions, and yet in every letter I find an additional occasion for them; especially in your last, which gives me a sensible uneasiness. It is with reluctance that I assume the stile of a monitor, or if you please of a *Mentor*, and will gladly abandon it whenever you will discard those follies which have rendered it necessary. You enquire the cause of my enmity to pleasure; an enquiry which I think would have been unnecessary, had you considered the unhappy change it has effected in your disposition. Pleasure, my brother, is the grave of reason, and the source of almost every vice. It enervates

vates the mind, impairs the influence of reason, and renders the man who is captivated by its alluring charms unfit for the practice of any social duty; and I wish my fears of its having already produced these unhappy effects on you may be premature. Sorry am I to tell you, that in your letters I can scarce discover a single vestige of that virtuous humanity, candour, generosity, and benevolence of disposition, which were once so conspicuous, even amidst the impetuosity of your youthful passions; which imparted such pleasure to our dear parents; and for the improvement of which they exerted such unwearied endeavours: On the contrary, various circumstances conspire to persuade me that you are indulging yourself in the gratification of your vicious passions; neglecting the studies and concerns of the profession you have chosen, and on which your future subsistence must depend; and disappoint-

ing the expectation, and promoting the unhappiness of an affectionate parent. I know that remonstrances against an indulgence in the pursuit of pleasure come with an ill grace from one in the early season of life, and must therefore desire you to reflect on their justice, truth, and importance, without remembering the person of their author; but if you cannot obliterate the idea of his youth, remember, at least, that he is a brother, actuated by an anxious solicitude for your happiness; and a brother who is not altogether regardless of those precepts which he wishes to inculcate.—I am willing to grant every thing which you can with justice plead in excuse. I will allow that the different passions and inclinations of mankind, in some measure depend on the mechanism of their bodies, and that we are all in some degree constitutionally virtuous or vicious. But however our natural propensities may incline,

cline, they still do not controul, nor destroy our moral freedom; notwithstanding their suggestions, reason, the soul's native monitor, points out those objects which are to be pursued or avoided; and those who disobey her dictates, will find, at a future retribution, that not the power but will was wanting. The end of education is not only to confirm the good, but repress the vicious dispositions of nature, which are never so deeply implanted, but they may be eradicated by the influence of precept, instruction, and example; all the advantages of which you have so eminently enjoyed, that you cannot possibly err, without counteracting the dictates of reason. And will pride and shame suffer you to plead the want of resolution in excuse for violating its precepts?— But how, my brother, could you so far divest yourself of humanity and justice, as to make a brother an instrument of his sister's ruin, and prostitute the ties

of

friendship, violate the laws of hospitality, and pervert your own accomplishments to destroy the happiness of a deluded girl, whose only crime was loving you, and drag down the most poignant affliction on an innocent family, and all for a criminal momentary pleasure, the very remembrance of which, will hereafter be imbittered with remorse, as that of every pleasure must be that is not founded in reason and virtue. In this, Charles, you have committed a crime which no excuse can justify: It is not the body only, but mind, that you have debauched; and the man who first seduces an innocent girl from the paths of virtue, is justly chargeable with all the subsequent crimes and misfortunes of her life. I am willing to believe, that in your eager chase of beauty, you have been rather inconsiderate than criminal, and have erred not so much from inhumanity as want of reflection; but want of reflection, however it

it may palliate, will not justify your misconduct; nor will it avail any thing if you alledge, that by her own forwardness she has invited your libidinous solicitations.—I know there are times when a concurrence of circumstances may render the passions too powerful for the sway of reason; but in London there are too many unhappy objects, reduced to the necessity of yielding to their gratification, for procuring the means of a wretched subsistence; and to these you ought rather to have recurred, than destroy the happiness of an innocent family. On such occasions these wretched objects, duly regulated and disposed, might be rendered useful to society; but suffering them to rove at large, and by their lascivious behaviour create desires which before had no existence, or by improving the advantages which intemperance but too often affords, to seduce not only the young, but even persons in a married state, and thereby

thereby introduce disease, discord, and misery into families, is a shameful neglect in the *Police* of any well regulated government.—Think not, however, that I mean to encourage a commerce with these wretched objects. Nothing is more dangerous, as it is the source of vice, disease, and poverty; and should never be recurred to, but in those unhappy hours when it is the only alternative to the crime of debauching the wives and daughters of our neighbours. As to the unhappy woman whom you have had address enough to win, I conjure you to avoid the repetition of your criminal pleasures with her; least vice become habitual, and destroy even the semblance of virtue. To quit the path of vice is difficult, but to pursue it is fatal. I know it is difficult to inforce this conviction in the early part of life, when it can only be of the greatest service; the strongest arguments, I fear, will at this time produce

duce but little effect, because consequences are seldom foreseen 'till they are unhappily felt: Almost all our experience in life is taught by the misfortunes, which result from our own misconduct; and it is not till we have suffered by them, that we attend to those lessons by which they might have been averted. You, my dear brother, are now arrived at the most dangerous season of life, and I have every thing to fear from the weakness of your reason, the violence of your passions, and the temptations to which you are exposed. Be on your guard therefore against their influence; your passions are enemies which will ever attend you, and, if not carefully resisted, will betray you into errors that will load you with infamy, and leave you to a long. repentance. Should this be the case, consider the affliction it would occasion, not only to a tender and indulgent parent, whose happiness is inseparably connected to

yours,

yours, but to me also, who interest myself in your welfare not less than in my own.

I rejoice at your reconciliation with Mr. S—— and family, which I hope no future indiscretion on your part will interrupt, as it is of the greatest importance to your future interest to acquire and preserve his esteem : To effect this, let me intreat you to cultivate that complacency of temper which above all things will best secure you against the ills of life ; and, as much as possible, to adopt that unassuming complaisance of character, which distinguishes a *prudent* man, and which Terence has excellently described *.

* Sic vita erat : facile omneis perferre, ac pati,
Cum quibus erat cunque una ; iis sese dedere,
Eorum obsequi studiis, advorsus nemini,
Nunquam præponens se aliis : ita facillime
Sine invidia invenias laudem. —

Andr. Act I. Sc. 1.

The

CHARLES WENTWORTH. 67

The admonitions I have given you in this letter, if you judge rightly, you will consider on the surest testimony of my affection; since in offering them I discharge the most painful office of a brother and friend: Happy shall I esteem myself, if by this, or any service in my power, I can contribute to your happiness, and demonstrate the truth with which

I am,

Dear Charles,

your most devoted

and affectionate brother,

Cantab.
Feb. 27, 1761.

EDWARD WENTWORTH,

LETTER

LETTER X.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

DEAR BROTHER,

YOUR'S of the 27th ult. I received a few days since, but in a disposition very unfit for reflection, especially on serious and moral subjects; as the expectations which I communicated in my last, were fully accomplished by an event which for several days engaged my whole attention. But lest I should be unjust to your reproofs, I shall reserve your letter to a future perusal; at a time when intemperate desire, allayed by reiterated enjoyment, will leave me in a disposition favourable to its contents.—That you may not however despair of success, I will make one confession that I know will give you pleasure, which is, that the satisfaction I have enjoyed in this adventure, is very unequal

unequal to the joys I promised myself therefrom ; and I begin to believe what you have frequently told me, *that all sublunary pleasures promise more in expectation, than they yield in fruition.*

I will likewise venture to assure you, that if I know the constitution of my own mind, it will very soon be in my power to comply with your request, and, without the least violence to my inclination, abandon her who was so late the object of my desire. Satiety has already succeeded enjoyment, and that will soon be followed by disgust. How unhappy is the disposition in our sex ? ever impatient, ever restless for the last favour, and ever disgusted as soon as we have obtained it. Why are we formed with these desires, or why are they annihilated by enjoyment ?—You, who know my incapacity for deceit, will easily believe that this inappetancy, this cold indif-

indifference must have been already perceived by Miss—. In truth she has already reproached me with it; but such is the imperfection of the human mind, that though I feel the justice of her reproaches, they have not produced the least change in her favour. Love is not to be excited by the will: its increase and decline are both involuntary. The very favours she has granted me have deprived her of the power of pleasing; and, in spite of my inclination, to be just, to be generous, the most favourable sentiment I can feel for her in compassion.

Notwithstanding my natural levity, and inconsideration you well know that I am not destitute of humanity, nor insensible to the misfortunes of others, especially those to which I have contributed; and will therefore believe that I am not without some anxiety, when I reflect that the consequences of my late adventure, may consign

CHARLES WENTWORTH. 71

consign the whole life of a woman to sorrow and shame.—But I find I have insensibly contracted a serious humour, which has affected my stile, and led me to expressions, which you may hereafter employ against myself; and shall therefore conclude with assuring you of the affection with which

I am,

Dear brother

your, &c.

London,
March 3, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH,

LETTER XI.

To Mrs. WENTWORTH.

DEAR SISTER,

THE anxiety which I felt at our late separation has been considerably diminished since my return to town, by the society and conversation of my female friends, Mrs. Wentworth and Mrs. Conway. You have already some knowledge of their characters, but as I am persuaded that a more particular account of them will afford you entertainment, and as I love scribbling on topics, which afford me an opportunity of doing justice to the merit of my friends, they shall be the subject of my present letter.

Mr. Stanhope, lately the husband of my friend, was descended from the younger branch of a noble family; and having

having no fortune, obtained by the interest of his friends, a genteel post under the government ; the emolument of which amounted to about 400l. per annum. In his youth he had received both a polite and liberal education ; but considering that the income of his post would cease at his own death, he entertained no intention of marriage, being unwilling to expose a wife and children to the distresses of penury after that event : However, at the age of forty, he became acquainted with Miss Howard, a lady of about thirty years of age, who had, some eleven years before, had suffered a severe disappointment by the death of a lover to whom she was soon to have been married, and had since then declined all subsequent offers of that kind. Nature had bestowed on her a very engaging person, and a mind replete with amiable qualities ; and education had added every accomplishment that could improve the one, or a-

dorn the other. They were mutually pleased with each other, and as their acquaintance became more intimate, their esteem ripened into a passion, which indeed partook more of friendship than desire, but determined them to an union for which neither before had entertained any inclination. Miss Howard was possessed of a fortune of twelve thousand pounds, which, by the savings from Mr. Stanhope's income, managed with frugality and oeconomy, they hoped would enable them to make some little provision for their children. Become the wife of a man advanced in life, she became an honour to his name, and the pride and happiness of his life. A succession of years made her the mother of three children; two of which died by the small pox in their early infancy. A daughter only remained: to educate her in the most advantageous manner the father and mother devoted a considerable

part

part of their time. Few parents were better qualified to convey instruction, or few children better disposed to receive it than the amiable Sophia. Maternal care and affection of all other duties is the most universally and religiously observed; it is a sentiment impressed by the hand of nature on all orders of animal beings, and prevails even over the love of life. Mrs. Stanhope felt the force of this principle in all its natural violence, and resolved never to become guilty of those evils which might result from her neglect, or too early desertion of her only child. She considered that in a world where vice ingenious at disguise, assumes a thousand seducing forms, even the most virtuous disposition requires incessant care and direction, and resolved to sacrifice her intercourse with an alien world to the happiness of a daughter, who might contribute to her felicity when deserted by that world. Her superintending care

she saw would be particularly necessary, from her daughter's extreme vivacity and exquisite sensibility, which would render her susceptible of the most lively impressions ; and therefore assumed the principal share of her education ; judiciously tempering the austerity of maternal authority, by the tenderness of friendship ; by which the young Sophia from infancy esteemed her parent as her friend, and habitually entrusted her with the most secret thoughts of her heart. By this knowledge the mother gained an opportunity to correct every improper sentiment which she might imbibe, either from her own juvenile errors, or those of her companions ; and, under the pleasing mask of amusement, to convey the most salutary instruction ; and thereby not only repress all culpable desires, but implant in their stead the most virtuous principles. She judged too justly to believe that solitude was the proper sphere of female education, or that her Sophia would

would pass through the world with more propriety and discretion, by being educated in a total ignorance of it: she thought it more eligible to convince her daughter from reason confirmed by some degree of experience, of the folly and insipidity of a life, spent in a constant pursuit of amusements; while she taught her both by instruction and her own example, how compatible a moderate and rational enjoyment of pleasure is, with the exercise of every social and moral duty. As reading is the most retentive vehicle of instruction, she knew her direction was highly necessary for her daughter in this particular. In much reading the mind is passive, and becomes oppressed with accumulated knowledge which it never digests, and the memory becomes burthened, whilst judgment and reflection languish in inactivity; this is especially the case when the reader's mind is open to the sentiments which are sug-

gested in reading, and implicitly admits, and indiscriminately treasures them up; for this reason Mrs. Wentworth not only directed her daughter to such volumes of history, biography, poetry, romance, &c. as she most approved, but encouraged her to reflect on whatever she read *, and not only to remark, but even write down the passages and sentiments she most approved; and assisted her in discovering their beauties and defects, the propriety and impropriety of their sentiments, imagery, diction, &c. by which she soon acquired an accuracy of expression, and an acuteness of judgment but seldom attained in that early season of life. Novels in general she did not approve, as many of them ex-

* If children were taught from the cradle to reflect even on trifling incidents, reflection would be seen to forego sentiments at a more advanced age.

hibit romantic incidents, vicious examples, unnatural characters, and immoral sentiments, and tend to convey erroneous ideas of life, and to soften the heart, and inflame the imagination, by scenes fraught with warm and alluring descriptions of love, representing that passion as the only pleasure, the only joy, and the only business of life. There are some few, however, which combine utility with entertainment, which exhibit characters drawn agreeable to nature, and within the limits of probability, and are calculated to render the reader better by virtuous examples. But whilst she recommended the latter to her daughter, she did not excite in her mind an inordinate curiosity to read the former by an imprudent prohibition ; she indeed represented them as improper, for a taste as yet imperfect, and a judgment not sufficiently matured, to discover and reject their errors ; and so well convinced was Sophia of her mother's soli-

citude for her happiness, that she willingly submitted to her advice in this and every other particular. She likewise carefully avoided those absurd precautions, by which parents frequently endeavour to preserve their children from vice, and thereby excite a thousand premature suspicions and ideas of it. In this manner Sophia has been preserved in innocence and virtue, and rendered capable of thinking and acting with a dignity that would have done honour to the other sex. How much more advantageous was this mode of education even than those of our best boarding-schools, where instruction is usually confined to the knowledge of modes and forms; where ladies are taught manners without principles, and where they are suffered to read for amusement rather than instruction.

When Sophia had arrived at the age of fifteen, she was deprived of a valuable

able father, and my friend of an affectionate husband, whose loss she deplored in a becoming but rational manner.—As Mr. Stanhope, instead of expending, had improved his wife's fortune, it had been by accumulated interest considerably augmented ; and this, with the savings of his own income, had enabled him, before his death, to purchase for Mrs. Wentworth an annuity of three hundred pounds per annum during her life, and to leave his daughter ten thousand pounds for her portion.

Miss Sophia was at this time a very amiable figure ; the graces of her mind and person were opening to maturity, and ripening to perfection. Her stature was rather above the middle size, somewhat slender, but delicately proportioned ; the form of her face was perfectly oval, and her features small and regular. Her eyes were black and vivid, her mouth small, her lips finely proportioned, and expressing a most lovely

smile ; her teeth small, regular and even, and in whiteness exceeding the finest ivory ; her neck was gracefully turned ; her hair thick, dark and glossy ; her arms, hands and fingers, white and slender, but happily proportioned ; and her whole person covered with a skin, unusually smooth and white. On her cheeks the lilly and the rose were delicately blended, and her countenance appeared expressive, tender, animated and engaging ; her air and dress neat and elegant ; her manners gay, and her gesture peculiarly graceful. Her temper was serenity itself ; free from pride, ambition, and envy ; her heart was abundantly stored with humanity, and, at that early season of life, suffered a sympathetic participation of others pains : though sensible to injuries she never resented them, except by declining the occasion and authors of them.—There are emanations from the mind which, like a ray of celestial

lestial fire, animate the form of beauty with a living soul : without these the most perfect symmetry is but a moulded clod ; and wherever they appear, the most indifferent features acquire a spirit of sensibility, and an engaging charm, which those only do not admire, who want faculties to discover. It was the emanation of a mind so amiable, so perfect as that of Sophia, which gave to the beauty and regularity of her features, those strokes of sensibility, those touches of innocence and dignity, which seemed to shine through them, and displayed charms too refined, for the discernment of vulgar eyes, that are captivated by a glance of beauty, assisted by vivid colour and gaudy decoration.—Her behaviour was distinguished by that species of pleasing unaffected gaiety, which was natural to her temper, and which tints the mind with ever-smiling, ever-varying charms ; adds ornament to reason, and gentleness

to manners, and becomes a perpetual spring strewing flowers over the thorns of life; and yet without any of that forward levity which seems to invite danger, by suggesting to the opposite sex the practicability of effecting the most dishonourable purposes; on the contrary, virtue in its native purity is so visible in her whole conduct, that envy itself cannot censure her actions.—Was I a man you would, from this description, naturally fancy me a lover, and without suspecting my sincerity, abstract much from the perfection I have attributed to the daughter of my friend; but from my sex and age you will know that I am not affected by visionary charms, nor captivated by a *creature* of my own imagination.

Mrs. Conway, my other female friend, is a most deserving woman, who has been sacrificed in marriage, to the
price

price of an obstinate parent. Urged by the suggestions of filial duty, and tired by alternate commands and reproaches from her father, she yielded her reluctant hand to Mr. Conway, whom she could not love, though she resolved to obey him ; and thus through a mistaken principle of duty, sacrificed her own happiness to parental authority. United, however, to a man who, at best, was but indifferent to her, religion and prudence taught her to discharge with invariable exactitude every conjugal duty ; and by an active attention and implicit obedience, even to the wishes of her husband, to obviate, as much as possible, those difficulties which might have arisen from want of affection. Though in many things his conduct was culpable, she incessantly endeavoured to remove, as well as conceal, the ill consequences of his indiscretion, whilst, at the same time, she attributed to him all the good effects resulting from

her

her own prudence. By this he enjoyed a character, to which he was far from being intitled ; and by her affectionate and discrete behaviour, she concealed from the most scrutinizing eye, her want of conjugal affection ; even Mr. Conway flattered himself that she really entertained that esteem for him, which before their union she frankly told him she had never perceived. Her own life, however, notwithstanding that external appearance of content and alacrity, which she endeavoured to assume, was, in reality, far from being happy, as an interior melancholly was ever present ; nor did she taste other joy than what resulted from a conscience of the integrity of her actions, and the hopes of a future and better life. She became, however, the mother of two children, a son and daughter, who created in her a new attachment to the world, and, in their education, afforded her a more pleasing employment than

she

she had before enjoyed, as her care in forming their minds to virtue was amply recompensed by its success ; and her hopes of their future merit and happiness, which maternal affection suggested, and which their progressive advancement in the road of virtue, authorized, afforded pleasure she had never before felt. The son, however, was early removed from the care of his parents to a public school, and from thence to the university ; so that the mother's care was confined to the education of the amiable Louisa, whom nature had favoured with a mind aptly disposed to receive and improve by instruction. The method adopted in her education was in many respects similar to that pursued by Mrs. Stanhope ; but she partook, in a considerable degree, of that pensive, serious disposition which was predominant in her mother, and had little inclination for scenes of gaiety ; but, on the contrary, became fond of retirement

tirement and contemplation, to an uncommon degree. The friendship between the parent and daughter was so intimate, that the latter scarce perceived any inequality, but in the superior virtues of her mother, and the respect she felt for them.—By Mrs. Conway's prudence, and the confined circle of Louisa's acquaintance, she was preserved in a happy ignorance of those little arts of disguise and affectation, so common in the fair sex; an advantage for which her mother was particularly solicitous, as she dreaded, above all things, a premature acquaintance with the fallacious arts of behaviour, which were the last things she would have chosen to anticipate. She disguised the most useful instruction under the pleasing mask of amusement, and painted in lively colours to her unexperienced senses the world in which she is to live, bestowing the most alluring charms and pleasing encomiums on a modest, virtuous behaviour,

viour, of which she is a living example. Whenever she painted vice, it was with the utmost deformity ; but this was very seldom, as she knew that to familiarize the idea of it, would render it less disgusting ; and that to make her acquainted with its universality, would render her less emulous in the pursuit of virtue, and furnish an excuse for her own misconduct. Whenever, therefore, she told Louisa of criminal characters and actions, she not only represented them as odious but as unfrequent, and described the world as being much better than it really is ; after this information, you will naturally believe that she concealed as much as possible from the knowledge of her daughter, not only her own want of conjugal affection, but the imperfections of Mr. Conway also, as a parental example which affords a sanction to vice, has, of all others, the most pernicious tendency. Louisa, from her fondness for retirement,

became

became strongly attached to reading and contemplation, by which she has already acquired a delicacy of sentiment, and an extent of knowledge, not frequently discovered in the fair sex. She has not only attained a competent knowledge of history, general and particular, geography, chronology, drawing, dancing, music, the French and Italian languages, which, with all the polite and ornamental accomplishments of her sex, she possesses in common with Sophia ; but has also, by the occasional assistance of her brother, lately made a considerable progress in the study of philosophy, and natural history, which will render her hours of leisure agreeable, preserve her imagination from the danger of meditating on less innocent objects, and her active mind from the embarrassment of idleness, and fit her to enjoy the soft and pure pleasures of innocence. Natural history, in particular, is a study which, if I may judge

judge from a superficial knowledge, is, of all others, the most pleasing and useful, and, I cannot but wonder, that it has not oftener been admitted as a part of female education. Even my slender acquaintance with this subject, enables me to derive amusement from the most trifling production in nature, and converts every object in the animal, vegetable, and fossil kingdoms into a source of pleasure, infinitely more rational and innocent than those which the gay world pursues at the expence of health and fortune. It enables the mind to contemplate the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, in the most minute of his works, and inspires sentiments of gratitude and adoration for him by whom every thing is thus wisely and happily constructed; and instead of that antipathy, that horror, which is generally entertained by our sex for the more uncommon animals, especially insects, and that cruelty with which

which we use others that are more familiar, I consider them all as the work of our Creator, and designed to participate with us the blessings of our common earth ; and while I adore the wisdom that governed their formation, I am pleased in contemplating their mechanism, discovering their properties and application to the wants of humanity, and in assigning them to the classes they ought to hold in the great scale of *Being*. It is thus that natural history at once becomes a source of piety, of useful instruction, and of rational entertainment.—As I have already described the person of Sophia, I will give you some account of Louisa's ; both have an uncommon share of beauty, but it is of different kinds. The person of Louisa is tall, majestic, and genteelly shaped. Her eyes are large and blue, sometimes vivid with sensibility, at others languishing with softness. In her air is

blended

blended an unusual dignity, but it is tempered by the benignity of her countenance. Her features, when considered separately, are not perfectly regular, or exactly proportioned; but they exhibit such a pleasing variety, that the composition of the whole, with a considerable part of mankind, produces a more happy effect, a more agreeable object than the most regular beauty. The charms of Sophia captivate, those of Miss Conway seduce the mind, creating through the eyes a sensation similar to the effect which harmony produces on a musical ear, and converting the soul into an uniform complacency and approbation. The charms of Miss Stanhope are those of perfect beauty, Louisa's are those of grace. The former possesses all the Circassian regularity of features; with every charm that can arise from symmetry and exact proportion, blended with all the softness of female delicacy.

The

The graces of the latter arise from the pleasing variety of her features, ever changing, but ever discovering some new, some latent charm to the eye of inspection: in contemplating her beauty the eye wanders over every object with delight, incapable of fixing any where, yet charmed with the whole; at one time she is seen contemplating with a solemn aspect, at another, compassionate with humid eyes, then animated with joy, and afterwards softened by sympathetic distress. Sometimes by affability and condescension inviting an approach, then repressing its presumption by the dignity in her air; and though not perfectly beautiful in either of these, singly, yet irresistably pleasing by the combination of them all.—But while you form an idea of her personal graces, do not forget the perfections of her mind; her native purity of heart, and her generosity, benevolence, and humanity of temper, improved

proved by an education which has taught her that to give pain is immoral ; that shocking the mind is as cruel as tormenting the body ; and that to please by her actions, without offending by words, is a moral duty. With these remember the elevation of her ideas, the justice, liberality, and refinement of her sentiments, the extent of her understanding, and that humble piety which the example and precepts of her parent have implanted in her mind, and which has rendered her indifferent to the possession of her superior attractions, which she considers rather as snares than blessings ; and whenever she discovers any symptom of that vanity, that is in some degree inherent in human nature, she instantly suppresses the rising foible, by reflecting, that whatever advantages of mind or person she enjoys above the ordinary part of her sex, she was passive in their reception, and that he who has formed her less perfect

than

than others, has not thereby exempted her from the duties of religion and humanity. How different are the amiable daughters of my friends from the generality of modern triflers, whose only merit is a pretty face, whose sentiments and manners cannot deserve approbation, much less excite admiration; and who from their confined knowledge can neither enjoy nor maintain any conversation but on the most trifling subjects, or the more dangerous and culpable topics of scandal and gallantry, and as the poet has justly said, are

Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,
Young without lovers, old without a friend;
A fop their passion, and their pride a
sot,
Alive ridiculous, and dead forgot.

The

The friendship that had from the early part of life subsisted between Mrs. Conway and Mrs. Stanhope, produced the same union of hearts between their daughters, who esteem each other with an ardour and disinterestedness, which to many would appear romantic. The vivacity of Miss Stanhope's temper has, however, been somewhat impaired by the death of her father, and her intimate acquaintance, and frequent conversation with Miss Conway; but not without communicating some degree of gaiety to the pensive sedateness of the latter, by which the contrarieties in the dispositions of these female friends were, in some degree, corrected, and their tempers brought to a nearer affinity with each other. As you are already acquainted with the death of Mr. Conway, I have thought it unnecessary to mention that circumstance.

I have been thus particular in doing justice to the daughters of my friends, because, in giving you such living testimonies of their integrity, in the discharge of their parental and conjugal duties, I exhibit the most incontestable proof of their merit; and shall now conclude a long letter with assuring you of the affection and respect with which

I ever am,

Dear sister,

your, &c.

London,
March 2, 1761.

HARRIOT CLINTON.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

To Miss CONWAY at Bath.

A TEDIOUS week is now elapsed, my dear Louisa, since your departure, the greatest part of which I have passed in impatient expectation of hearing from you; but have the mortification to find you are so attracted by the perfections of your lover, that you have not leisure to communicate your happiness to your friend. Believe me, Louisa, I am almost angry at this neglect. How have I mistaken your disposition, notwithstanding the intimacy of our friendship? your sensibility and refinement, I thought, had given you a distaste for the conversation of the ordinary part of the male sex, and inspired an idea of so much perfection in the man who could gain your affection, that I had little expectation of seeing you so

soon in *love* : pardon the expression. — And has Mr. Benson really all these accomplishments, which you have pretended to think necessary in a lover ? If he has, I congratulate you on your acquisition, even though it may, in some degree, deprive me of your society ; which nothing but the consideration of your happiness could make me willing to forego, or even allay my uneasiness at your present absence. — I find that my taste sensibly improves ; since cards, scandal, unmeaning gallantry, and commonplace conversation, every day become less entertaining : indeed, my dear Louisa, I would prefer one hour in your society, to months employed in the trifling amusements, that engage the attention of the gay world.

But I have an article of intelligence, which I had almost forgot to communicate ; and this it is, that Mr. *Bernard*, whose name
you

have before heard, yesterday desired to be received as a suitor to your friend, in a formal, but precipitate, application to my mother, who has conceived a better opinion of him than, I believe, I shall ever entertain; and indeed you will naturally believe that I have no very flattering expectations from this affair, by omitting it till the close of my letter; on the receipt of which I expect you will dismiss every thing else, even Benson himself, and instantly give me a detail of every particular that has happened since your departure. Why have you delayed it so long? Is it consistent with the nature of our friendship? But this lover is the cause: how happy must he be, if he has sensibility sufficient to discover the extent of your merit? I should certainly become his rival, could I but change my sex.— I am now summoned to receive a visit from Mrs. and Miss Parker, and have time only to tell you that your absence,

by giving me a juster idea of the value of your friendship, has, if possible, improved the affection with which I shall ever continue,

Dear Louisa,

Your most faithful

and devoted friend,

London,
March 6, 1761.

SOPHIA STANHOPE.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

To Miss SOPHIA STANHOPE.

YOU justly attribute the cause of my silence, dear Sophia, to Benson, who has indeed engaged my attention for some days past, but not so much to my satisfaction as you seem to imagine.—In short, a most disagreeable discovery has kept me, for some time, in a state of tormenting irresolution, and prevented my writing to you sooner; but it is now at an end, as I have chosen the part which I am resolved to act.

There are some circumstances in my life with which even you, Sophia, are unacquainted.—This is a confession that I know will surprize you; as it implies a want of confidence on my part, that is an injury to the purity of our

F 4 friend-

friendship : and yet, Sophia, I can hope for your pardon, when I assure you that my concealment was occasioned only by that reluctance, which an ingenuous mind naturally feels against exposing its own indiscretion, or folly, to the knowledge of a friend, whose blameless conduct has freed her from every obligation, to treat the faults of others with an indulgence which her own actions do not require.—But though you should pardon this concealment, will your friendly partiality so soon excuse that misconduct which was the occasion of it? Or with the severity of justice will you not rather determine, that want of prudence is a want of virtue? Be it as it may, I have much to hope from your favourable prepossession, and will free my mind from the load of a painful secret, which it will be difficult much longer to conceal.

You

You know that my father, not long before his death, influenced by pecuniary views, which with him unhappily prevailed over every other consideration, endeavoured to persuade me to give my hand to Mr. Seabright, and that he persisted in this endeavour with an obstinacy approaching to cruelty; notwithstanding the aversion I entertained for him, and which I freely avowed. In that situation I applied to Mr. Seabright himself, hoping to persuade him to desist from his addresses, by representing the unfavourable disposition of my heart towards him, and the unhappiness he ought to expect in marriage with a woman thus disposed. But I found myself mistaken. Excess of either delicacy or generosity, were not among his foibles: inflamed by desire, which subsisted even in the autumn of his life, he sought rather his own gratification, than the happiness of the person he pretended to love; and

replied, " that my charms, (allow me to use his own words, without the imputation of vanity) pleaded against me with irresistible eloquence ; and that he was persuaded, from my good sense, that when it became my duty to love him, I should no longer continue indifferent." Thus disappointed, duty taught me to endeavour to mollify the obdurate heart of a mistaken parent, by every persuasive art ; by arguments drawn from the reason and fitness of things ; and by all the influence of female rhetoric, applied to the suggestions of parental affection. But though all these were unable to alter his purpose, of violently joining the reluctant hand of a daughter to an odious object, I resolved not to encourage either the father or suitor to hope for my compliance by an appearance of irresolution, but to convince them, that after having considered the subject with all the attention its importance

portance required, I was determined to persevere in my resistance, with becoming firmness, decency, and respect; and happy would it have proved, if I had contented myself with adhering to this resolution.—I had not long before commenced an acquaintance with Mr. Benson, who soon entertained me with professions of love: you, Sophia, have seen and approved his person, which is, indeed, worthy to be the habitation of a better mind. He had acquired the usual fashionable accomplishments by travel and conversation with the Beau Monde; and had, besides, an agreeable assurance, which is too often successful to the prejudice of superior, modest merit: in point of fortune he was unexceptionable. I compared him with Seabright, whom I despised; and you will naturally believe that he lost nothing by the contrast. My father's intentions in favour of Seabright, did not permit me to see him, ex-

cept in public, and that but seldom; and I consented to an intercourse with him by letters, to which he importuned me, and in which he discovered an elevated understanding, and a generosity and refinement of sentiment; so that I began to entertain an esteem for him, which, when compared to my sentiments of Seabright, appeared like real love. About this time my father became very importunate for my marriage with Mr. Seabright, which reduced me to an unhappy dilemma: I could not comply, and dreaded the consequences of a refusal. Mr. Benson then became apprehensive of losing me, and expressed great uneasiness on that account. I assured him, his apprehensions were unjust, and that I never would give my hand to Mr. Seabright. He desired some stronger assurance, and mentioned a *contract*. I replied, that "a man who proposed such an expedient for securing a

woman,

woman, betrayed either a distrust of his own merit, or such a diffidence of her constancy, as was inconsistent with the purity of that passion he pretended to entertain for me." He replied, "that neither of these motives had produced this proposal; but that he knew the sense I entertained of filial duty, and feared, that notwithstanding the esteem, with which he had the happiness to think himself honoured, I might be induced to sacrifice his, and even my own, happiness, in obedience to paternal authority." He added, "that a contract might answer a farther useful purpose; as my father, on becoming acquainted with it, would, doubtless, desist from farther importunity." This observation had some influence on my resolutions: I told him, I thought it a child's duty to respect the advice of a parent in the choice of a husband; but could not think it just or reasonable for a parent to controul her

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NO THE HISTORY OF

inclinations in the most important transaction of life, and when its happiness or misery depended on the indulgence of those inclinations. As this was sufficiently acknowledging the injustice of compulsion in this particular, he soon found means to persuade me that the surest expedient to avoid it, was to comply with his proposal of a contract ; and, to my shame, Sophia, I must confess, that I was so indiscreet as to yield to his persuasions ; and accordingly signed a solemn engagement, never to become the wife of another, whilst he continued unmarried, without his consent, under penalty of forfeiting ten thousand pounds, the sum to which, he supposed, my fortune would amount. He had the generosity to execute a similar engagement ; and we mutually agreed, that the transaction should be kept secret, unless my father should proceed to greater extremities relative to Mr. Seabright. But from

this

CHARLES WENTWORTH. 111

this he was prevented by a fever, which, soon after, unhappily ended his life; and the whole transaction has hitherto remained a secret. A tour to France, which business, soon after, obliged Mr. Benson to make, prevented my seeing him till a few days before this journey, which my mother's indisposition induced us to undertake; and on which he, as you know, attended us.—A few days after our arrival here, I received a large packet from Mr. Spencer, a gentleman educated at Oxford, and one who I knew to be intimate with Mr. Benson, in which were inclosed copies of all the letters I had received from the latter, before my father's death. In this Mr. Spencer informed me, that Benson had shewn him all my letters, to which, at his desire, he had wrote the answers; copies of which he had kept and inclosed; and that tho' he despised both the imposition and its author, yet, as his circumstances were uneasy,

uneasy, he had consented to lend his assistance to deceive me, in consideration of some advantages he expected to obtain from Mr. Benson; but as he had since injured him in a very tender point, he thought himself under no obligation to conceal the imposition. He added, that Mr. Benson, except his exterior appearance, had not one valuable qualification; that this understanding was uncommonly deficient; and his conduct governed by the most interested and unmanly principles.

Notwithstanding it was apparent that Mr. Spencer was induced to this relation from motives of revenge, yet it conformed so nearly to the sentiments that I then began to have too much reason to entertain, that I could not reasonably doubt its truth. I then recollect~~ed~~ many particulars which had before escaped unnoticed, and which conspired to confirm what my subsequent observations indubitably proved.

But

But how could I be so grossly deceived ? And yet how could I avoid it ? Whenever I was with him in public, the conversation always turned on common trivial subjects, where a defect of sense is not so easily discovered ; and our private interviews were so few and short, that the subject of love, which, of all others, was to him the most familiar, engrossed our whole attention. — And can I take as a partner for life, a wretch destitute of those qualifications which are essentially necessary to connubial happiness ; and one who has descended to the most despicable impositions, to delude me into this engagement ? No, Sophia, never ; be the event what it may. — O my friend, how much do I want your consolation, in this unhappy embarrassment ? And yet I fear it will be several weeks before my mother's health will permit me to return to town, and the re-enjoyment of your conversation ; and must therefore beg you

fre-

frequently to favour me with your letters, and do me the justice to believe, that neither prosperity nor adversity, will ever impair the esteem with which I have the happiness to be,

Dear Sophia,

Your most affectionate

and most faithful friend,

Bath,
March 10, 1761.

Louisa Conway.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

To Miss LOUISA CONWAY.

DEAR LOUISA,

I AM now seated to answer your favour of the 10th inst. But what shall I write?—That the intelligence you have thereby imparted to your friend, gives me the greatest uneasiness; that I perceive the difficulties of your situation, and participate your anxiety, are truths of which I hope you are already convinced; nor need you doubt of my excuse for that want of confidence, which so long kept from my knowledge a transaction that, I fear, will ultimately produce disagreeable consequences to you. If your secrecy, on this subject, is unpleasing, it is only because it deprived me of the opportunity of offering you my advice, at a time when, I dare believe, it would have produced a happy effect

effect on your resolutions, notwithstanding the superiority of your judgment; since, with a moderate portion of understanding, it would have been easy to prove, that to profess an honourable, a sincere passion for a woman, and yet desire to controul her inclinations, at the expence of her happiness, by an engagement, is a most absurd inconsistency; and that the proposal to which you precipitately assented, alone betrayed the surest proofs of an ungenerous, interested, and unmanly disposition; and ought alone to have been deemed a sufficient cause for discarding its author.—You rightly expected me to forgive your reserve; but, at the same time, unnecessarily ask, whether I can so soon excuse that misconduct which was its object? As dissimulation, between friends, is a crime, I shall confess, that I think you have greatly deviated from your usual discretion in the present instance; but

can,

can, nevertheless, assure you, that you have nothing to fear from that severity of justice with which you erroneously invest your friend ; who is far from thinking, that what you are pleased to term “*blameless conduct*, has freed *her* from every obligation, to treat the faults of others with an indulgence which her own actions do not require ;” on the contrary, if my progress in the world has been hitherto made, without any important error, I am far from arrogating to myself any merit on that account. I have, hitherto, travelled in the strait, smooth path of life, under the auspicious direction of a provident parent ; without encountering one perplexing, one embarrassing, or unusual obstacle ; and not to err in such circumstances, at best can be but a negative virtue. In short, Louisa, you may believe, that the instance of indiscretion, which is the source of our present uneasiness, has in no respect impaired

the esteem and friendship, which I have so justly entertained for you. I know, my dear Louisa, that there are many circumstances in your favour, which, if they do not fully exculpate, will, at least, greatly palliate your imprudent engagement; which is one of the many instances that too frequently happen, of the evils resulting from parents assuming authority to controul those inclinations which they ought to content themselves with guiding. If I mistake not, Mr. Hume somewhere very justly observes, that the notion of duty, when unable to overcome its opposite passions, is apt rather to increase and irritate them, by producing an opposition in our sentiments and principles; as the efforts of the mind to surmount the obstacles which oppose our inclinations, do but excite and confirm the passions themselves; and, if I know my own temper, I am sure that the very idea of parental compul-

sion in the article of marriage, would naturally inspire me with aversion from a person, who might otherwise not have been disagreeable ; and, as I am persuaded, this is universally the case, how irrational and unjust is the conduct of too many fathers in the arbitrary disposition of their children in marriage ; who from capricious or interested views, are thereby consigned to a life of misery ; but had you, my friend, been content to oppose the coercive designs of your father with decency and respect, instead of complying with Mr. Benson's dangerous expedient, your conduct would have been laudable, whatever consequences it might have produced. But, by a contrary behaviour, you are involved in difficulties, from which, I fear, you will not easily extricate yourself : not but you have a right to expect Mr. Benson to relinquish your engagement, if his passion was real ; as it would be incompatible with true love,

to

to desire you to comply therewith at the expence of your happiness ; but, if I am not deceived, you will find his passion to be of that selfish kind, which aims only at the gratification of its possessor. Should this be the case, your situation will become not a little embarrassed ; and you will have need of better and more mature advice than it is, at present, in my power to afford you.—O, my friend, how much I regret your imprudence ! the natural effect of the integrity and benevolence of your own heart, and your unacquaintance with the vices of others.

— O lovely source
Of generous foibles, youth ! when opening minds
Are honest as the light, lucid as air,
As fostering breezes kind, as linnets gay,
Tender as buds, and lavish as the spring !

Shenstone.

Though

Though I lament, yet I am far from being surprized at the success of that imposition, by which you have been misled, which was indeed natural, I had almost said inevitable; as the usual topics of mixed conversation are so trivial, that a very confined understanding may support a tolerable part, without apparent defect. However, not only the author, but discoverer of this imposition also, deserves contempt, for having prostituted his accomplishments to so wicked a purpose.

Adieu, my friend; let me hear as soon as possible the event of your present embarrassment, which, I sincerely hope, will be agreeable to your wishes; and, assure yourself, that I shall improve every opportunity of testifying the esteem and devotion with which I truly am,

Dear Louisa,

Your most affectionate friend,

London,
March 13, 1761.

SOPHIA STANHOPE.

VOL. I.

G

LETTER XV.

To Miss STANHOPE.

HOW shall I sufficiently applaud the goodness of my dear Sophia, who has not only forgiven, but generously endeavoured to exculpate her friend, from an indiscretion too considerable for justification? It is in vain that you attempt to restore me to a level with yourself; even the modesty, affection, and generosity, with which you detract from the merit of your conduct, and palliate mine, instead of destroying, confirms the superiority, which you evidently deserve, and which I freely yield to my friend; whose example I will hereafter endeavour to imitate, whilst I emulate her virtue.—As you are pleased to interest yourself in my concerns, and impatient to know the event of my im-

prudence,

prudence, I make haste to communicate it, though by no means conformable to my wishes. After my last, Mr. Benson's defect of understanding, and sordid, illiberal, and ungenerous principles, became every day more obvious, and produced a sensible change in my behaviour, which he naturally perceived, and, several times, enquired its cause, with which I resolved to make him acquainted: accordingly, when he this morning entered my dressing room, I desired him to excuse my leaving him a few minutes, telling him, that if he pleased, he might amuse himself, till my return, with those papers, (pointing to the pacquet from Spencer, which I had before purposely laid on a table) and retired.—After a proper stay I returned; and, on entering the room, observed, he was disconcerted in a manner which, even his natural assurance, could not conceal. “ I now perceive, (said he) Miss Louisa, the cause of that

change in your behaviour towards me, which has been so visible for some days."

"The discovery, Sir, (replied I) requires no great penetration." "And do you then really believe the truth of this letter?" said he. "If, Sir, (replied I) you really desire to know my sentiments, I will tell you freely, that the observations which I could not but make, since our conversation, has been unattended with those restraints, which before concealed your imperfections, and assisted your imposition, affords such convincing proofs of the truth of what is alledged against you by Mr. Spencer, that I do not entertain even the shadow of a doubt on that particular; and feel the mortification of considering myself as a dupe to your base and illiberal artifice." The tone and emphasis with which this was expressed, convinced him that a denial, without altering my opinion, would but add the baseness of falsehood to his offence; he,

there-

therefore, with some hesitation, confessed that he had sometimes consulted Mr. Spencer, relative to the answers of my letters, and had occasionally profited by his advice ; but added, that the matter had been grossly misrepresented, and vowed revenge against Spencer. I told him, that neither his warmth, nor the manner in which he attempted to palliate the charge, would convert my opinion to his advantage ; and desired to know what he could plead in excuse for the baseness of his imposition. To this he very gallantly replied, " that excess of love had prompted him to it, as the only method of obtaining me." I told him, " that if I might judge of his love by its effects, it was not of the most eligible kind ; and that the discovery which Mr. Spencer had made, was so much to his disadvantage, and had created in me so great an aversion for him, that I could never fulfil the engagement to which I had been

deluded, without consigning myself to future misery ; and that if his pretended love was not confined to himself only, he would, on that consideration, relinquish those pretensions he had so meanly acquired. He replied, that he had no idea of a passion that could so easily relinquish its object. I then answered, that his reply was such as became a man actuated by the most sordid and illiberal motives, and insensible to every sentiment of generosity and disinterested affection ; but that I would take effectual care to prevent the success of his villainy ; that though I doubted the legality of a contract, obtained through such base deception, I did not think myself at liberty to recede from a solemn engagement ; and would therefore religiously avoid marrying any other person, while he should continue single, unless with his consent, though I was resolved, whatever might be the consequence,

quence, never to unite myself to him whom I must for ever despise ; and that I desired, for the future, to be freed from any farther communication with him ; saying this, I threw him the contract that he had signed, and retired, as he did soon after, and hope to see him no more.

This, dear Sophia, is the state of your friend, who is embarrassed with a man, who has all that low artifice, and sordid avarice which constitute the most exceptionable part of a character, drawn by the celebrated author of *Clarissa*, to excuse her opposition to the desires of her parents, and her consequent elopement with Lovelace ; and can I think of forming the most intimate, permanent, and sacred union with a man of this character ? The answer is obvious ; and my resolution unalterably formed, even without waiting for the advice of my friends,

who are all, except yourself, but partially acquainted with the extent of my indiscretion ; from that reluctance, which all must feel, against exposing their faults to the cognizance of their friends, and thereby injuring themselves in the opinion of those persons, for whose esteem they are particularly solicitous. It is, time, however, to undeceive the best of parents and brothers, to acquaint them with the extent of my weakness and folly, and convince them how little I deserve that excess of affection with which I have been favoured. Good God ! how painful is the duty ? Tell me, Sophia, can there be a surer evidence that our actions are repugnant to the rules of prudence and virtue, than our fear of exposing them to the cognizance of our dearest friends ?—As my mamma's health has lately received a favourable change, it will, probably, encourage her to continue here several weeks longer, unless

the

the knowledge of my embarrassment should induce an alteration in her disposition, and give me sooner an opportunity of verbally testifying the truth and devotion, with which I have the happiness to be,

Dear Sophia,

Your most faithful

and affectionate friend,

Bath,
March 20, 1761.

LOUISA CONWAY.

LETTER XVI.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

I HAVE waited for some time, dear Charles, in expectation of hearing from you, as your last was but an imperfect reply to my preceding letter; though, I confess, it inspired me with a small hope of a favourable turn to your disposition and pursuits, from your apparent inclination to desist from any farther intercourse with the unhappy woman you have seduced; and yet, upon reflection, I fear this circumstance will not warrant the hopes which an anxious solicitude for your welfare has induced me too precipitately to conceive; since it is apparently but the natural effect of satiety, unassisted by reason or repentance. In addressing Miss, you was not influenced by affection, but stimulated by appetite,

and enjoyment alone was the object of your pursuit: this being obtained, her capacity for pleasing is lost, and indifference and desertion naturally succeed: *That this is agreeable to the known disposition of our sex, is an important truth which females ought to convert to their own preservation; and whenever they are sollicited to incontinence, should consider, whether it is prudent to oblige a suitor at the expence of reputation and virtue, when the favour will be repayed with nothing but disgust and aversion.*—Though I am pleased with your readiness to desist from farther intercourse with the woman you have seduced, humanity will not suffer me to be insensible to the difficulties in which it will, probably, involve her. After she is forsaken by her first seducer, will she not listen to new solicitations, till habit imperceptibly impairs her aversion from vice, and plunges her into public prostitution? or can it be expected, that she

will be sollicitous for the semblance of virtue, when she has lost the reality? If not, will you not become answerable for the depravity of her mind, the pollution of her body, and the infamy of her future life? This is a reflection which I would obtrude on your mind, till it excites that remorse which alone can effectually secure your reformation.—Your progress in the follies and vices of youth is already more than sufficient. Resolve then to amend, and *begin*; for, as Horace says,

Dimiduum facti qui cœpit, habet.—

Incipe. Vivendi recte qui prorogat horam
Rusticus expectat dum defluat Amnis:—

I hope by the time you receive this, your disposition will be apt for reflection on the subject of my last letter; and that it will produce effects conducive to the end for which it was written, as your happiness, next to my own, is the object
of

of my greatest solicitude; and the only consideration that could have induced me again to adopt the unpleasing stile of a monitor, instead of those agreeable expressions of approbation, which I hope you will hereafter enable me to add, to the proofs of that affection with which I truly am,

Dear Charles,

your, &c.

Cantab.
March 21, 1761.

EDWARD WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

YOU justly complain, dear brother, of my having but imperfectly answered your former letter; and, though I am now writing to you, I perceive that the same cause of complaint will subsist when I have finished.—My attention is, at present, engaged by another object, and of that only can I think or write.

The evening preceding the last, I went with a friend to Drury-Lane theatre, somewhat earlier than usual, as a full house was expected: we enjoyed a side-box to ourselves, till near six o'clock, when two ladies entered, a mother and her daughter, as they proved: the latter was “in the bloom of beauty’s pride,” and the most amiable object I had ever seen:

seen: her charms, indeed, had not that glare and brilliancy which dazzle the sight, without reaching the affections, but a graceful elegance and simplicity, which produces more happy and permanent impressions. Her person was tall and exquisitely genteel; her features delicate and happily proportioned; her countenance diffused the most enchanting benignity, sweetnes, and complacency; the mild lustre of her eyes expressed innocence, sensibility and intelligence.

“ Her air diffus’d a mild, yet awful ray,
Severely sweet, and innocently gay.”

Shenstone.

In her dress, fashion and grace were united, and she appeared to have been justly sensible that no woman should conform to a general fashion, which is repugnant to her own personal beauty. In short,

— “ She seem’d, nay more than seem’d,
divine.”

I found

I found myself irresistibly attracted by her charms, and rose, as did my friend also, and desired them to accept the front seat, (they having neglected securing places) which they did, with expressions of thanks for our politeness: during the performance, I had sufficient reason to admire the delicate propriety of the young lady's observations, and endeavoured to join them in conversation, in which I succeeded to their seeming satisfaction. But before the performance ended, I found myself affected by the contagion of her charms, and a secret emotion, hitherto unfelt, played upon my heart, and disconcerted every look. I grew more timid, yet more curious, and, with trembling pleasure, gazed on the lovely object. The performance ending, the hour of separation came, much too soon.—I desired and obtained leave to hand her through the croud to her chair, as my friend did her mother: by the way,

way, the fear of never meeting her again, prompted me to enquire the place of her residence ; an enquiry, which I mean to tell her, I was sensible might deserve the imputation of impertinence and ill manners ; but that my future happiness depended on seeing her again, which the extent of this metropolis might render impossible, without this information. But every attempt for making this enquiry was repressed by a diffidence and timidity, which I had never before felt, and which is an inseparable attendant on a faithful and obsequious passion ; and such was my agitation, that I did not even think of making any enquiry from her chairmen, or taking any other measure to discover the place of her residence.

What languid anxiety has succeeded the interval since that time, and rendered every object joyless and insipid ? In short, I feel symptoms, which, if I am

not

not mistaken, strongly indicate love, tho', perhaps, I may never again see its object.—This is all the information I can give you on the present subject; and, as I can write on no other, I shall only add, that I am not insensible of the goodness with which you interest yourself in my welfare; and, that on some future occasion, I shall endeavour to convince you of the gratitude and affection with which

I am,

Dear brother,

your, &c.

London,
March 24, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

LETTER XVIII.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

YOUR last, dear Charles, conveys evident marks of the impetuosity of your passions, the warmth of your imagination, and the imbecility of your reason, and convinces me how unequal you are to the charge of rightly conducting yourself; fixed, as your residence is, in a place where the utmost caution is constantly necessary: you are now arrived at the foolish age of catching sudden fire; the season when young Desire, with its pleasing train of flattering hopes, ardent wishes, and expected joys, magnified through its fallacious perspective, precipitates the warmed imagination into the most extravagant errors. Love is a passion you ought wholly to preclude from your mind in your present age; as it will

engrofs

gross too much of your attention, and divert you from the studies and improvement of that profession you have chosen, and which must be the instrument of your future support. Endeavour, therefore, to guard your heart from every fond impression, at least, till you have attained the state of perfect manhood; nor even then indulge a thought of love, till you have found a deserving woman, superior to female follies, and qualified to become the reasonable companion of a reasonable man; one whose mild, complacent temper, and sweetness of disposition may produce invariable harmony.—To these must be joined a fortune, that will be an equivalent to the attendant expences of an increasing family; a circumstance to you indispensably necessary, till the increase of your own may render it less essential. These are necessary qualifications in a wife, since, without the latter, happiness

is

is hardly attainable in the present unnatural state of things ; and without the former, you would soon find, by experience, that wealth is a poor recompence for bartered peace. How imprudent, how childish then, is your prepossession in favour of a woman, of whom you have no other knowledge than her external appearance, and whose acquired perfections, however numerous you may fancy them, have, probably, no existence but in your own imagination ?

An qui amant, ipsi, sibi somnia fingunt ?

Virg.

Is it not ludicrous seriously to profess a prepossession for an object, of whom your knowledge is so imperfect ? Will reason authorise it ? Or has that "*languid anxiety*" of which you complain, any other than a very whimsical cause ?

Quis talia fando temperet a risu ?

Fie, Charles ! have more consideration ;
nor ever indulge a growing approbation,

which

which an inflamed imagination may precipitantly form, till reason has authorised the first step to passion, and determined you to a choice it will for ever approve.

I have just received a letter from our dear mother: she has heard no farther complaints of your misconduct from Mr. S—, since your late reconciliation; and flatters herself from thence, that your manners and actions are amended. Let not the best of parents be disappointed in her expectations, nor be insensible to the sublime pleasure, the interior joy of deserving and receiving her approbation.

I am,

Dear Charles, your, &c.

Cantab.
March 27, 1761.

EDWARD WENTWORTH.

LETTER XIX.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

YOUR last letter, dear brother, gives me some pleasure, as it affords me an opportunity of encountering you on more equal terms than those you have before allowed me.—Secure in the integrity of your conduct, and engaged on the side of virtue, was it difficult to convince me that the effusion of youthful levity and indiscretion, were hardly defensible against one who availed himself of all the sophism of ethics, and the precepts of theology? But quitting the most advantageous situation, you have ventured on the field of conjecture, and even had the temerity to question the existence of those perfections that adorn the most amiable of women; but if you are not inaccessible to conviction, it will

soon

be in my power to convince you of your error, and reprove your infidelity.

I last evening visited our good aunt Mrs. Clinton; and, on entering the room, with equal pleasure and surprize, discovered (with her mother) the charming object who had given me that inquietude, which you was pleased to treat as a subject of raillery in your last. You are acquainted with the communicative disposition of Mrs. Harley, and therefore will not be surprized to hear that she had acquainted Mrs. Stanhope, (her intimate friend, and the mother of my charmer) with the most material incidents, as well as characters, of our family; and as our meeting at the play-house was not forgotten, upon hearing my name, she received me with the freedom and familiarity of an acquaintance, which soon suppressed the agitation I had suffered from surprize and joy at entering

tering the room, and allowed me to join in a conversation that turned on subjects of speculation, where the sentiments of every one were expressed without reserve or restraint, and which soon became sprightly and animated, as it ever will, when persons are pleased with each other, and solicitous to please. Hitherto I had discovered only her exterior graces: the beauties of her mind now opened themselves to my enraptured fancy: the integrity of her heart, the delicacy and acuteness of her wit, the dignity, generosity, and refinement of her sentiments, delivered with the most elegant propriety of expression, and assisted by the grace, the sweetness and benignity of her aspect, were charms too powerful to resist; and soon gave me reason to exclaim in the language of Virgil;

“ *Nunc scio quid sit amor.*”

—Nor is my passion founded on an illusion of the senses, or a warmed imagination, as you are disposed to believe, since the perfection which Mr. Clinton this morning ascribed to the amiable Sophia, was not inferior to the idea I had before conceived of her. I have, indeed, discovered that her fortune, joined to such conspicuous merit, is greater than I can justly pretend to. However, Mrs. Stanhope, before she retired last evening, favoured me with an invitation to visit at her house in ———, which I shall certainly do very soon, though, I must confess, that the discovery of her daughter's condition, and the knowledge of my own inferiority of merit and fortune, has given me great disquietude. If, contrary to my expectations, she should conceive an opinion too favourable of me, and bless my passion with an equal and unmerited return; yet such is its purity, that whilst

I am

I am conscious of the inequality that subsists between us, I cannot wish to lessen her I love, and whose happiness to me is dearer than my own, by an alliance so unequal.—Never did the knowledge of my want of fortune afford me any uneasiness, till it became an obstacle to an union which alone can give me peace. Why has fortune created this disparity, and why was I not born to a more elevated, or she to a more inferior station? All I can hope at present, is to cultivate her esteem; and if in this I should succeed, and have reason to hope for her favour, in case my inequality of fortune should be removed, that hope would animate me to undertake the most laborious, and even dangerous enterprize to repair that defect.—To this account, of an affair that engrosses my present attention, I can only add, that I flatter myself the expectations of our mother, as far as they relate to me, will suffer no considerable

disappointment. Though I have committed errors, I am conscious to myself, that they never proceeded from any malevolence; and I doubt not but they will be thought excusable by an indulgent parent, whose affection I shall ever be solicitous to preserve.

I am,

Dear brother,

your, &c.

London,
April 2, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

WHAT am I to understand, dear Charles, by your last letter? What enterprize have you in view; what dangers are you going to encounter; or what distant regions will you visit, to raise your fortune to an equality with that of a woman, who, perhaps, never thought of you, except when in her presence? Is this only extravagance, or is it not rather phrenzy, and a confirmation of that old position, "*Amare et non insanire vix Diis concessum.*" — You exult at the supposed advantages I gave you in my last, and threaten to reprehend my infidelity to the perfections of your charmer: you then proceed to a narration of facts, which you expect will serve this purpose; but, in the end, forget to apply them to that, or any other.

H 3

—But

—But granting Miss Stanhope all the accomplishments you attribute to her, could you have any assurance of their existence at writing your last letter; or was it unreasonable to suppose them the creatures of your own imagination? Unusual accidents will sometimes occur, and create exceptions to the propriety of the wisest precautions; and should Miss Stanhope be as you have described her, and your passion for her be finally successful, it will be an accident of that number, but can never contradict the justice or pertinence of the advice I lately gave you on that subject; and I have still yet reason to believe, that you are encouraging a passion, that after having diverted your attention from other and those very important objects, will prove unsuccessful, and excite many pangs before it be subdued. “*Principium dulce est, sed finis amoris amarus:*”—To caution you against the society and conversation

of

of the fair sex, would be to advise you against a commerce which nature has designed, which constitutes the principal felicity of life, and which is even necessary to form the character of a gentleman, and soften and refine his manners from that rust and asperity they will otherwise contract, and which will produce an unsociable misanthropy, instead of a complacent temper, embellished with that desire of pleasing which ever pleases.

This species of gallantry in the male sex, when perfect purity and politeness are preserved, produces an exertion of every virtue and every accomplishment, and diffuses a polite and liberal air over their manners, air, and deportment. To spend the hours, therefore, which can be spared from study or business, in the society of women of merit, is to act the part of a prudent and polite man ; but it will, at the same time, be necessary to guard a-

gainst the contagion of beauty, and all the blandishments of female art; and cautiously suppress the first emotions of a prepossession, which may ripen into a passion that your dependant situation will not allow you to gratify; or, which from the superiority of the object, may never receive a favourable return.—*Scylla & Charybdis*, the rocks of Homer's ingenious invention, should ever be kept in view: there is a *strait* between the corruption of the age and your own passions, which you must endeavour to pass without shipwreck. That you may do this, is the ardent wish of,

Dear Charles,

Your most affectionate brother,

Cantab.
April 6, 1761,

EDWARD WENTWORTH.

LETTER XXI.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

DEAR BROTHER,

AS I have neither leisure nor inclination to continue a moral contest, I shall not particularly reply to your last, but confine myself to a subject in which I feel myself more particularly interested.

The second day after writing to you, I visited Mrs. *Stanhope*, agreeable to the invitation I had received, and have twice since repeated my visit, and been received with affability and politeness, both by her and the lovely Sophia, in whom I have discovered some new charm, some latent object of admiration at every interview; and at every visit have found my passion sensibly improved, but without declaring

H 5. it,

it, except by my eyes, whose language it is impossible to restrain; and I have sometimes fancied she understands their meaning, without being disgusted at its presumption:—with what glowing pleasure does the flattering idea expand my heart! It is a just observation of one intimately acquainted with human nature, that to declare love at first sight, is to submit the declaration with all the arguments for and against it, to be agitated by an unheated imagination; and that he greatly mistakes who discloses the matter, till his silence becomes painful to the object of his passion. You will not be surprized, therefore, if I am not solicitous to give her any other than uncertain proofs of my affection, such as the eyes and actions only convey. — Last evening, at Ranelagh, I had the happiness of meeting Mrs. and Miss Stanhope in the—. They were viewing, through a window, a grand firework, then ready for exhibition.

tion. There was a small vacant space on the side next to Sophia, into which I tremulously stole; and my hand reclining between her and the cieling below the window, unexpectedly met the hand of Sophia, (the softest that ever woman boasted) in a place secluded from the sight of all others. A tremulous joy thrilled through every nerve at the sensation, and the inordinate pulsation of the arteries along my fingers, doubtless, informed her of my *sensibility*; yet she scarce made an effort to withdraw her hand, whilst mine insensibly endeavoured to retain it; and, conceiving the pain I should otherwise suffer, from her natural benignity she prolonged my happiness, by leaving it immoveable.—This was a great deal; but it was not enough. Infatiable love is ever grasping at new favours: her hand was shut, and mine wanted to embrace it.—Love inspired me with courage to open it, and, with rap-

ture, I perceived her yield to the soft violence; and then impelled by the most tender sensations, I compressed it with an ardour equal to the violence of my passion. But this temerity had well nigh lost me a blessing, of which I was too tenacious: as I perceived she had thoughts of resuming her hand; so acute are the sensations arising from such delicate, such transporting objects! threatened with a loss so considerable, I was taught by happy *instinct*, rather than reason, to preserve the blessing, by seeming insensible of it, and diminishing the ardour of my compression: this was my only expedient, and it succeeded. But I too soon forgot the danger I had so lately escaped; and after presumptuously repeating my offence, she actually withdrew, and I reluctantly resigned, her hand. The grief and disappointment which I suffered at this disaster, were, doubtless, visible, and after a short, but

painful

painful interval, Sophia repented her severity, and her innate goodness engaged her again to place in my way the hand I had so lately offended. Again I seized the treasure, and rested it on a heart that advanced to meet it, palpitating under the timid pleasure. Heavens ! how exquisite were my sensations ? I felt that which renders silence eloquent, which gives meaning to the downcast eye, and produces that expressive confusion, which, through the veil of timidity, discovers the tumult of passion, and reveals ideas it dares not express. Sophia herself was not insensible. I perceived a sweet languor in her eyes, and, with rapture, observed the emotions of a bosom divinely charming ; for such I discovered it thro' the covering which modesty imposed : the busy eye, with jealous vigilance, insinuating through a friendly interstice, wandered beneath the *reflecting lace*, to the ravishing confines of those snowy

orbs

orbs on which the eye might for ever feast ; and by instructing the sense of *feeling* conveyed to the fingers, that elastic resistance they dare not experience. — What a miserable asylum for lovers is a crowded assembly ? How tormenting the restraints imposed by public observation ; and how incompatible the calmness and decorum they require with the emotions of love ? — By this time the fireworks, which I had not once seen, were concluded, and the removal of the spectators, to my great regret, put an end to this interview of eloquent silence, in which I had, for the first time, felt the pleasure of loving, and of those tender sensations resulting from that sensibility which is the purest essence of the soul. — What may be the event of my passion, Heaven only can tell ; but its impressions are so deep, that they must be lasting ; and if it

CHARLES WENTWORTH. 159

should finally prove unsuccessful, misery must be the allotment of

Dear brother,

your, &c,

London,
April 15, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

To Miss CONWAY.

TO have a just sense of our own errors is to attone for them. Yours, dear Louisa, is too exquisite, and has led you to aggravate an indiscretion, to which the most virtuous of our sex, in your situation, might have fallen — To convince you how little I deserve that superiority, to which you would unreasonably elevate your friend; suppose I should confess, that notwithstanding the event of your connection with Mr. Benson, has proved the danger of a passion precipitately formed, from an imperfect knowledge of its object; yet the imbecility of my own reason has betrayed me into a prepossession as precipitate, and, perhaps, as unjust! This confession, I am persuaded, would effectually

destroy,

destroy, in your own mind, that disparity you have attempted to create between us ; and, perhaps, I might make it with some degree of truth.—However, I remember to have somewhere heard it delivered as a maxim, that a woman, who dares to think herself in love, has broke through the bounds of *reserve* ; and as I am willing to divest myself of that sentiment, I will not yet believe, or confess, that I have conceived a passion incompatible with it ; though I have lately felt sensations that are unusual, and such as I do not well understand. To be plain, Louisa ; I have lately been made acquainted with a young gentleman, the younger son of major Wentworth, of whose family and death you will, doubtless, remember to have seen an account, some years since, in a letter from Mrs. Clinton. I first saw him in a box at Drury-Lane theatre, where I happened to be with my mother a few weeks since ; and

though

though I was pleased with his person, air and manner, yet, as he was a stranger, I thought no more of him, till an accidental meeting with him at Mrs. Clinton's, some days after, laid a foundation of an acquaintance, which has since been rapidly improved.—I will not particularly describe his person; however, you shall see him, Louisa, at your return to town. Content yourself, therefore, at present, with knowing, that he is tall, straight, and well turned; his features harmonious and agreeable; his countenance florid and manly; and his aspect free, open and easy: that his air is easy and polite; his address insinuating, and his eyes vivid, with a lustre that expresses the pleasing sprightliness and vivacity of his disposition.—These you will, however, say are but exterior charms, and therefore the least essential.—True, Louisa, but when virtue assumes a pleasing form, it ever becomes more attracting: an agreeable

greeable person, like an honourable title, naturally engages a favourable prepossession ; and when it is adorned with mental accomplishments, serves as a mirrour to reflect them with augmented lustre.—

Every time I converse with Mr. Wentworth, I discover proofs of a happy genius, cultivated by all the advantages of education ; his ideas are just and extensive, his sentiments elevated and liberal. His conversation is replete with erudition, politeness and gallantry, animated by that vivacity, of which he has indeed too great a portion ; but this is, in some degree, the effect of youth, and will be but a temporary imperfection. I ought likewise to add, that his expressions are, occasionally, blended with a little of that delicate flattery, which pleases in spite of ourselves.—Flattery ! Delicious essence ! How pleasing art thou to nature ? How strongly are all its powers, and all its foibles on thy side ?—I do not, Louisa,

believe

believe my disposition more favourable to this species of praise than those of others, and yet I am not always displeased with it; and to be so, is unnatural: we are disposed to esteem those who contribute to our self-satisfaction; and he who raises us in our own esteem, naturally shares a part of it himself; and, I will venture to affirm, that when flattery is timely and delicately applied, it will universally produce this effect on the most austere mind, however it may fail them when it is gross, or appears fraught with art or design.—But, leaving this disposition, ought I not to expect, that after reading my description of Mr. Wentworth, you will believe me to have been drawing an imaginary character; and suspect, that all his accomplishments owe their existence to my own partiality.—That this is ever, in some degree, the case in love, I am disposed to believe. The mind, agitated by that passion, from

real

real or supposed charms, naturally endows its object with as many other accomplishments as is possible, without contradicting the plainest sense, and often converts its very imperfections into beauties; and then adores the *visionary being*, that never existed but in a diseased imagination: and this is the real source of those different sentiments that individuals often conceive of each other, and which are frequently so opposite in themselves, and so repugnant to truth, that they could never exist, did the mind judge from real qualities only.—I cannot, however, believe that this reflection is pertinent to the account I have given of Mr. Wentworth, or that I have yet conceived this *creative partiality*, for a man for whom I entertained no other sentiment than that of meer approbation, till the evening preceding the last, when I met him at *Ranelagh*, where I was with my mother, and where our position for viewing

viewing the fireworks, accidentally presented him a favourable opportunity of taking my hand, which I suffered him to retain, perhaps imprudently, till the ardour of his pressure, and the emotions of his soul, which the fire of his eyes, the animation of his countenance, and the disorder of his actions betrayed, like contagion communicated themselves to my breast, and inspired sensations to which I had before been a stranger.—How dangerous must any relaxation from reserve be, when this little adventure, into which curiosity, and too much confidence in the innocence and integrity of my heart betrayed me, could produce such emotions! Believe me, Louisa, I shall from hence preserve a greater degree of caution on this particular, than I had before thought eligible. Do not, however, imagine, from the freedom, or rather extravagance, with which some parts of this letter are

deli-

delivered, that I have really conceived a passion for a man, who has made no declaration of a particular attachment to me, unless it be by his eyes (whose language I can but very ill interpret).—No, Louisa, I have a better opinion of myself.

As to the resolution you have formed concerning Mr. Benson, I can only observe, that my opinion will be of no use, in a subject on which you have already determined: but if it will give you any satisfaction to know, that your determination has my entire approbation, you may enjoy all the pleasure that assurance can afford you; and I doubt not but you will one day find, by happy experience, that your present expectations of future embarrassment from Benson are unreasonable; since I cannot believe, he will continue to resist your wishes, when he finds them unalterably opposed to his own.

I am

I am glad to hear of the amendment in your mother's health; and though your absence from town is to me painful, I shall patiently support it as long as her stay at Bath may prove salutary. Let me hear from you as often as possible, and assure yourself of the truth and affection with which

I have the honour to be,

Dear Louisa,

your, &c.

London,
April 6, 1761.

SOPHIA STANHOPE.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

To Miss SOPHIA STANHOPE.

I CONGRATULATE you, dear Sophia, on Mr. Wentworth's accession to your acquaintance: it is an event which (as I already perceive) will hereafter prove to you interesting, and, I hope, auspicious.—I do not suspect that you are really in love; but abstracting all that extravagance with which, you pretend, some parts of your last letter were written; it will, notwithstanding, afford the strongest presumption, of your having already received impressions, which may be easily improved into that tender passion: with those early distinctions in his favour, which you have acknowledged, he will be admitted to your toilette as an agreeable friend and companion; there he will improve the soft morning hours to his ad-

vantage. Conversation will insensibly become more serious and interesting: particular applications will be made from general topics; sentiments of love and constancy discussed; whilst the poor gentleman laments his unhappy propensity to both, and wishes to heaven he had known neither; and you, with an awkward emotion at the latent meaning of these words, tell him, you believe neither of them will do him any harm. Encouraged by this *reproach*, the poor man declares, what *nothing* would otherwise have extorted; “*that it depends on your goodness only.*”—The ice is now broke!—The mighty secret exposed!—What is then to be done?—Why, my surprized indignant friend, “is sorry he has put it out of her power to preserve any longer the esteem for him, which she confesses to have once entertained, but must never again meet him to hear such *provoking* language.”—The lover (for from hence

hence he assumes that character) deprecates your wrath; blames your pernicious charms, and the perversion of his own fate; implores your pity; and, in *despair*, presses your hand, (which, in *anger*, you forget to withdraw) and faithfully promises never again to speak to you of love;—if he can help it.—With this *pleasing* assurance he is forgiven, and readmitted to favour.—The progress of love from hence becomes more uniform and rapid; and, if no foreign obstacles intrude, the farce of courtship terminates in the tender and acceptance of marriage proposals.——But, Sophia! will you not be surprized at this strain of raillery, so repugnant to the stile of my last letter? Doubtless you will.—Know then, my friend, that I have just experienced it to be better to expect the worst that can result from an embarrassment, than to feel the pangs of suspense, agitated by alternate hope and fear.—Since I have

known Mr. Benfon's ultimate determination relative to me, I have familiarized and reconciled myself to the worst consequences it can produce, that is, to a single life, which has nothing in it so very disagreeable. All those future difficulties that before gave me pain, have either wholly disappeared, or are seen through a different and more pleasing medium. To this let me add, that I have freed myself from those painful apprehensions, which a sense of my concealed misconduct, and the necessity of revealing it to the best of parents, produced.—She has been made acquainted with its utmost extent; and though she blames, she has yet forgiven my indiscretion; and assured me, (with the same goodness that I have experienced from you) that it shall never deprive me of that share in her affection I before enjoyed, and which is necessary to my happiness.—After sinning, how pleasing is it thus to be forgiven?

thus

thus to learn the goodness of my friends. But it ought to caution me not to offend them by again requiring this indulgence; since though the first fault may be the child of simplicity, every other must be the offspring of guilt — My brother has likewise been wrote to on this subject; and should his answer be such, as I expect from the goodness of his heart, my mind will then recover its former tranquillity. My mamma's health is still improving, and, I hope, in a few weeks will permit our return to town, and restore me to your society and conversation, where I shall demonstrate the friendship and devotion with which I truly am,

Dear Sophia,

your, &c.

Bath,
April 19, 1761.

LOUISA CONWAY.

LETTER XXIV.

To Miss LOUISA CONWAY.

I AM pleased, my dear Louisa, with that happy change in your disposition which I discover, from the sprightly raillery with which you treat the future progress of my acquaintance with Mr. Wentworth: you will see by the information I shall, from time to time, give you on this subject, whether your conjectures were just.—Since I wrote to you last, I have frequently seen and conversed with Mr. Wentworth; but nothing very particular or interesting was introduced on any of these occasions, till last evening, when my mamma was out on one of those visits of ceremony, from which I am always averse, and had therefore found means to avoid accompanying her: she was but just gone when he entered,

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(unexpectedly I assure you); he seemed pleased at finding me alone, and after a few minutes conversation; "Dear Sophia, said he (blushing) it is necessary for me to profit by this favourable opportunity, for declaring those sentiments which I have found it impossible to exclude; and which, I doubt not, but you have already perceived." I answered, that "I had perceived nothing that could occasion any particular allusion." "Can it be possible, (replied he, that a passion so violent as mine, should have been hitherto imperceptible; and need I tell you, dear Sophia, that the perfections of your mind have improved the impressions, that the exterior graces of your person made on me the first moment I saw you, into the most ardent and perfect love, of which the human mind can be susceptible!" "I am sensible, (added he, finding I made no reply) that it is a culpable presumption in me to aspire to such perfection; but

this I hope the goodness of your disposition will induce you to pardon, since to wish for the possession of an object beloved, is natural to all; and to know, and not love you, would be a mark of the greatest insensibility." Whatever you may think to the contrary, I assure you, dear Louisa, that mine is not one of those romantic dispositions that are mortally offended at the presumption of a declaration of this nature; and that require ten or twelve years of successful and adventurous service to expiate the crime: a little dissimulation may be proper, on the part of a woman, to avoid becoming too easy, too cheap a prize; but this mistaken delicacy is frequently carried to a culpable excess. — There was such feeling earnestness in his looks, and the tone of his expression, that I could not doubt his sincerity. I told him, however, that though the respect I entertained for his judgment, made his

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professions flattering to my vanity, yet I was too sensible of the number of my own imperfections to think I merited them ; and that on a farther acquaintance he would, doubtless, find reason to alter his sentiments, if those were his sentiments which he had just expressed : “ they are, and will be mine unalterably,” replied he. “ If so, I shall think myself obliged to you, said I, for the honour you do me, and esteem you in the number of those friends, whose acquaintance I shall continue with pleasure.— “ Dear Sophia, replied he, I am charmed with your candour, and henceforward shall make it the study of my life to cultivate the friendship to which you have condescended to admit me ; and endeavour, if possible, to improve it into that tender passion I so sensibly feel. Should my aspiring endeavours succeed, transporting thought ! how happy shall I be ; blest in your person with every perfection that can con-

tribute to connubial felicity?—But stay! said he (pausing) to what lengths have I been transported by the pleasing delusion? Alas, there is another obstacle to the success of my wishes; and though the conspicuity of your charms, and my own sensibility, continued he, have made it impossible for me not to conceive the passion I have dared to confess, yet the sense of my own inferiority torments me with the utmost painful sensations: never, till I felt the power of your charms, did I regret my want of fortune; devoted to a life of activity, I was content with the expectation of earning a decent subsistence, by the discharging the duties of a profession I had chosen as the most agreeable to my inclinations and useful to society. But since I have known and adored you, I have reflected, with the utmost disquietude, on a defect so obstructive to my happiness, and lamented that I was not born to a rank so elevated, and endowed with a fortune and

merit

merit so extensive that I might, without presumption, aspire to an union which alone can make me happy. Yet, dear Sophia, though I feel that I must be miserable without you, I am not so ungenerous, so destitute of honour, as to wish, through low, selfish interested views, to lessen the object of my love, by *seducing* her to an alliance with one who is, in many respects, unequal to a blessing so exquisite.—No, dear, dear Sophia, all that I have dared to propose to myself by this declaration, and the repeated visits I have had the honour of making, is only to inspire you with such sentiments in my favour as will authorize me to hope, that, if the inequality in my fortune could be repaired, I might flatter myself that my addresses would not then be disagreeable to you; and should I ever have the happiness of attaining this envied object of my wishes, I would abandon my friends, my country, and even you, Sophia! and

endeavour, in foreign climes, to repair that defect which now obstruct my hopes: there fired and supported by the expectation of one day possessing the most amiable of her sex, I would maintain the most assiduous application to the most dangerous, and, even laborious (if profitable) employments, as the only expedient by which I can overcome the difficulty in question, and *evince the disinterested purity of my passion.*" — To this I replied, that "I was pleased with the delicacy of his sentiments, but did not conceive the reality of those obstacles he seemed to apprehend from his want of fortune; that to prove the disinterestedness of his passion, I did not think an equal portion of wealth necessary; nor did I think it ought to be any obstacle, when there was, on either side, a sufficiency to make two people happy, who could be so with each other's affection, and a decent competency: that I entertained

tained so just a contempt for the pomp and parade of life, and those amusements for which such sums are squandered by the rich and gay; that a privation of them would never in the least impair my happiness; and that I was by no means mercenary, which I must be if I rejected his addresses from any deficiency of fortune: but after this declaration, added I, it is but just to inform you, that the knowledge I have of my own heart, or of your merit, is so imperfect, that I am unable to determine whether I could give you my hand, was your condition ever so opulent; and yet the conjectures I have formed concerning you are so favourable, that I shall willingly receive your visits, with the permission of my mother, whose consent I shall ever think necessary on these occasions; as I have long experienced her prudence and affection, and am convinced she will never attempt to controul, or even restrain my incli-

inclinations, unless they evidently lead to my own disadvantage." "The generosity and elevation of your sentiments, rejoined he, if possible, augments my passion, which was before too violent, and I will improve the first occasion of soliciting from Mrs. Stanhope that permission you justly deem necessary; but permit me to add, that though the moderation of your desires allows you to think my want of fortune no obstacle to my hopes, I shall always dissent from your opinion on this particular; nor will I ever consent to deprive that merit, which deserves the most elevated rank and station."—You will not impute it to my vanity, dear Louisa, that I have adhered to truth in relating some parts of this conversation, that reflect unmerited praise on myself. I am far from having been elated by them, as I well know how much these flattering encomiums, so liberally bestowed by the other sex, de-

viate from the real language of the heart.—As I thought the conversation had been sufficiently extended for the present, I ordered tea, and took care not to be again left long alone until my mother returned: soon after which Mr. Wentworth took leave; but returned again this afternoon, and solicited her permission to visit me as a *suitor*: he indeed declared to her (as he had done to me) that “he considered himself incapacitated for marriage at present, by his want of fortune, and never would ask my hand whilst that obstacle continued; and that he had dared to propose nothing to himself from the permission he had solicited, but an opportunity of inspiring me with such sentiments as would give him reason to hope for a favourable reception, when his want of fortune should no longer exist.”—All this was quite unexpected to Mrs. Wentworth: she told him, however, that “his visits would be acceptable; but

that

that the levity of youth rendered his matrimonial intentions premature at present ; and she hoped, that both he and myself would have sufficient discretion to perceive the impropriety of forming any engagements on a subject of so much importance, until our judgments should be farther matured by the revolution of, at least, a few more years ; and that if we should then be disposed to join our hands, she would not oppose our inclination." But, after all, I believe she would chuse to have me aspire to greater advantages in point of fortune. What a fruitful source of disappointment to lovers has not this particular proved ? and yet Mr. Wentworth has some reasonable expectations from an uncle (his father's elder brother) who has no children, and is possessed of a considerable estate, which he will naturally participate, in some degree, with his brother, now at the university of Cambridge.

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Permit me now to hope that the speedy and perfect establishment of Mrs. Conway's health, will give me an opportunity of verbally communicating the future progress of my acquaintance with Mr. Wentworth, and of approving myself by every service in my power,

Dear Louisa,

Your most faithful

and affectionate friend,

London,
April 28, 1761.

SOPHIA STANHOPE.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

To Miss STANHOPE.

I NOW perceive, dear Sophia, that “acquaintance” (as you are pleased to term it) with Mr. Wentworth, is making a rapid progress towards (I believe I may say) the greatest intimacy; and, indeed, I begin to suspect (however unwilling you may be to believe it) that the little urchin has been dealing his arrows at the heart of my friend: do not, however, imagine, that this suspicion is an imputation of weakness, or want of precaution in you. Love is the most elevated and generous of all passions, and, of all others, the most incident to virtuous and liberal minds; it is an involuntary inclination, an inconsiderate enchanting affection, founded on a temporary, but charming illusion of the senses, which soften

softens the cares, and alleviates the ills of life; and is best capable of filling the tedious voids in the craving, restless mind; but the duration of this capricious sensation depends neither on the object to which it is attached, nor on ourselves; but, being founded on a delusion of the senses, it suspends reflection till its own vigour is exhausted, and is itself then depressed by returning reason.—This, Sophia, is my opinion of that passion which you are beginning to feel: and may you experience all its joys, without any of those ills that are too frequently its attendants: this is a wish that my own interest has suggested, since I shall ever participate your happiness.—Since my last, I have received my brother's answer, which I shall inclose herewith, together with my reply thereto. As my mind has, for some days, recovered its former tranquillity, I have joined in the various scenes of amusement, which this

city

city affords; where all appear in full and splendid attire, and the highest finishing of arts and expence are combined with the prevailing power of beauty, the insinuation of polite address, and the dignity of rank and fortune; softened by the commerce of love and gallantry, and the pleasing circumstances that arise from a free intercourse of the sexes. But, above all, the crowds assembled at gaming-tables, afford a scene of amusement to me, who, in the midst of tumult, can attend reflection, and calmly contemplate the ridiculous combination of youth and age, beauty and deformity, with their various good and ill qualities, in full exertion and contrast; and see the opposite agitations of successful and unfortunate parties; some animated with ridiculous joy and exultation, whilst others are disfigured with restless anxiety and anger, and all are too solicitous, too deeply interested in

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the success of their game, to attend the observation of others.—What a spectacle, Sophia! for persons, who profess a friendship for each other, to set down with deliberate intention, or, at least, hopes, of accomplishing each other's ruin?—But enough of a place, which my mother's returning health will, in a few days, permit me to leave.—Benson is already gone from hence to town, I hear. I avoided seeing him, except in public, before his departure.—Let me consider;—What have I more to communicate?—Many things, my dear Sophia!—but I will defer them all a few days, when I shall have the pleasure to assure you, in person, of the unchangeable affection of your

Bath,
April 2, 1761.

Louisa Conway.

To Miss CONWAY.

Inclosed in the preceding.

IT is with concern, my dear sister, that I learn the indiscretion of your conduct, towards Mr. Benson, so repugnant to the opinion I had before formed of your prudence and caution. Be not offended, Louisa, at the severity of this expression: though I cannot approve, I will, nevertheless, forgive your misconduct; but, on this condition, that you allow me to place it in a proper point of view, that it may be reflected to your mind in its real colours. As often as we err, it is our duty to profit by our errors: the wisdom they teach, as it is dearly purchased, ought to make the most happy and permanent impressions. I hope, my dear sister, that you are not one of those, who esteem love as the whole

whole pleasure and business of life, and think every hour a burthen in which they are diverted from an adventure. The season in which your connection with Mr. Benson began, was much too early.—

Even our friendships at that age, are but casual intimacies, formed by some corresponding folly, and again dissolved by an opposition in folly. All our other attachments are just as impermanent; and it is peculiarly necessary, that lasting impressions should not be made till reason has acquired sufficient strength to direct us in the choice of their objects. Why then would you, at that age, bind yourself to a connection that nature never intended to last? Girls in love, at that season, fancy perfections that have no existence; and when a favourable prepossession is once excited, she who has read what qualities a lover ought to possess, immediately endows the man with them; and all his actions seen through the jaundiced

diced eye, confirm the errors of her fancy. It now appears how much, and how unhappily you have been mistaken in your opinion of that wretch, whose base artifice creates in me as much anger as I feel sorrow for its success. But had he really been all that you thought him, could he deserve, that for him you should break through the primary duty of life, obedience to parents; and thereby disobey those, who, by the laws of nature and your country, are constituted the guardians of your virtue, and the governors of your actions, at the expence of their affection and your own reputation? I expect you will plead in excuse the mistaken conduct of your father, without which, I am willing to believe, you would not have acted in this manner; but his unhappy error could not authorise you to commit a greater.—But how had your mother deserved the distrust with which you treated her on that occasion?

occasion? Surely the follicitude she has always discovered for your welfare, should have engaged you to advise with her on a subje&t of the greatest importance to your happiness. I do not complain of your want of confidence in me, though I have ever endeavoured to merit it as a brother and friend.—But I know your virtuous sensibility will too severely feel this reproach, and will quit a subject, which is painful even to me. Your past error has been sufficiently reprehended; let it be forgotten as it is forgiven, and our care be to prevent the future.

Youth is fair virtue's season, virtue then
Requires the pruner's hand.—

Shenstone.

There is a peculiar asperity in the condition of female life, your own sex your greatest enemies; watched on every side with all the discernment of malicious en-

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vy, and surrounded by lovers, without one friend in their number.—Love, my dear Louisa, is the rock on which you have already suffered, and from which you will be in the greatest danger; since though implanted in our natures for the wisest and most important ends, to which it conducts by the most delightful means, yet if it be not subject to the direction and controul of reason, it will become a source of pungent misery. To know when the professions of love, with which you may be entertained, are sincere, and the passion that may be pretended for you, is of that perfect, disinterested kind, which alone can deserve a return, or authorise you to indulge a favourable pre-possession for a particular object, is of great importance.—The longings of appetite, or the suggestions of self-interest, are too often honoured with the name of love, the most refined of human sensations. When attracted by per-

sonal beauty, or exterior accomplishments, a man perceives himself violently attached to a particular object; is impatient of her absence, and transported with her presence; when the extent of his wishes is the possession of her person, by whatever means it may be obtained; is he actuated by love or appetite? The man who aims at more refined pleasures, and seeks, in the object of his passion, the agreeable companion, the intimate friend, the partner of his joys, the comforter of his cares, his counsellor and assistant in all the duties of life; in short, every tender, social character, in that of a wife; and having found a woman, whose natural and acquired perfections equal the utmost extent of his wishes, solicits an union with her, as a certain expedient for securing his own happiness, without considering, whether he is equally capable of making her happy, and is less attentive to the interest and felicity of her

he professes to love, than of himself; and would not relinquish his pretensions, though a fairer prospect of happiness to her might appear, and accord with her own inclinations; in this case the man is evidently in *love*, but it is with *himself*. Judge then, my dear sister, the nature of that passion which Mr. Benson has conceived for you. That man who attempts to conceal from the object of his passion, any defects either in his fortune, his personal, or mental qualities, or refuses to concur in any step that promises advantage to her, even though it might retard, or finally prevent the union for which he is sollicitous; or if, in short, he does not in every circumstance consult her advantage; it is evident his own happiness, not hers, is the object of his desire; and that he is incapable of pure disinterested love, that elevated passion, which exalts the most celestial of all virtues, *benevolence*.—

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I need not tell you, Louisa, that if a candidate for your heart makes the least attempt on your chastity, he has marked you out a prey to his libidinous appetite. If, to obtain his base purpose, he promises marriage, and even intends to perform it (which is rarely the case) when circumstances are more favourable, he is a wretch regardless of his own honour and character, which, from the time he esteems you his wife, is inseparably connected with yours. If, on a slight acquaintance, a man vows an inviolable attachment, professes ardent love, and presses a precipitate marriage to allay his torment, he is agitated by the violence of appetite, or (if you are his superior in fortune) by the suggestions of interest. True love never manifests that impatient ardour, and its only foundation is a thorough knowledge of the merit of its object.—If a lover by his real merit, assiduously disposed in the most advantage-

ous point of view, should ever obtain your affection and confidence; and the transporting moment arrive, in which female reserve melts before his tender solicitation; and you, blushingly, own him lord of your heart, give up every secret of your soul to his friendship, and resign your future conduct and concerns to his advice and protection, if he be a real lover, impressed with generosity of sentiment, and virtuous sensibility, he will, thenceforward, become more tender, but more respectful, and unassuming: he will not, in public, betray a knowledge of his power over you; and when, in private, he indulges the pleasing remembrance of that confession which has made him happy, it will revive his gratitude, and stimulate his endeavour to merit that favourable distinction; his desire will then be not only to please, but bless you; and will improve every opportunity of indulging your innocent desires,

without

without attempting to dissuade you from any purpose, but by convincing you of its impropriety or repugnance to your interest. As a friend, he will correct your errors, and reprove your foibles, while he disclaims all invidious pretensions to superiority, by exposing his own to a reciprocal condemnation.

A due attention to these reflections, my dear Louisa, will enable you, in some degree, to judge of the merit, dispositions, or designs of those persons, who may hereafter profess a passion for you ; and hereafter to avoid those indiscretions by which you are now embarrassed.

I know, my dear sister, that you are all innocence ; and that if heaven preserves to you the blessing of a tender mother, to watch over the inadvertency of youth, and guard against the excess even of virtuous affection, you will avoid the ap-

proaches of vice: remember she is your best and most disinterested friend, and let her always be the confidant of your secrets; nor ever let false shame prevent you from disclosing your sentiments, and profiting by her advice and instruction; and assure yourself that I shall always endeavour, by every act of love and friendship, to convince you of my solicitude for your welfare, and to approve myself,

Dear Louisa,

Your most affectionate brother,

Cantab.
April 28, 1761.

HENRY CONWAY.

To

To Mr. CONWAY.

Inclosed in the preceding.

YOUR admonitions, my dear brother, I receive with gratitude as the strongest proof of your sollicitude for my welfare, and the most effectual means of promoting it. I freely acknowledge the justice of your reprehensions; nor shall I, as you expect, endeavour to exculpate myself by attributing my own error and imprudence to a deceased parent; whose mistakes, filial affection teaches me to envelop with a veil impenetrable to memory; but, on the contrary, will take to myself the blame of my own misconduct; and whilst I suffer by its consequences, will endeavour to improve by suffering: and as you, my dear brother, have kindly imitated the benign example of the best of parents, and pardoned my late

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deviation from duty and affection ; assure youself that it shall, hereafter, be my constant study to give you as few occasions, as possible, of thus obliging me ; and let me entreat you to continue to correct my errors by your instruction, and supply the place of that father of whom providence has deprived me.—By your assistance, joined to the advice and precepts of my dear mother, I may, even in this season of youth, acquire all the advantages resulting from a long and intimate acquaintance with life, and a more extensive and mature understanding : I may enjoy the benefit of misfortunes, without suffering their pain ; learn the futility of pleasures, without feeling the disappointment resulting from satiety, or from their inanity ; and see the dangers attendant on a change of state before I enter it, and the wretched effects of vice before I am exposed to it. Continue, therefore, to be my coun-

sellor

sellor and friend; and, assure yourself, that by a free and unrestrained communication of all my concerns, and an exact conformity to your advice, I shall, hereafter, leave you no cause to impute a want of confidence, or of gratitude to

Your most affectionate sister,

London,
April 6, 1761.

LOUISA CONWAY.

LETTER XXVI.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

DEAR BROTHER,

IN my last * I acquainted you with the manner in which I had ventured to declare my passion for the amiable Sophia, and its reception by Mrs. Stanhope and herself; and have since been frequently indulged with the pleasure of her society and conversation, which has likewise been shared by Miss Conway, an amiable young lady, lately returned from Bath, who is the intimate and inseparable friend of Miss Stanhope, and has many charms both of person and mind, though the former are of a dif-

* This letter having been rendered unnecessary by the insertion of one from Miss Stanhope on the same subject, is therefore omitted.

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ferent species from those of Sophia, who, like Hebe, has that luxuriancy of beauty, which is open, sprightly and commanding, whilst the charms of the other are soft, modest, and alluring ; but in each, youth, health, and innocence shine through a transparency of complexion and sensibility of countenance, that would affect even age itself. But my affection for Miss Stanhope pervades my whole soul, and renders me inaccessible to every foreign impression ; so that I can contemplate Miss Conway's charms without emotion, though not without admiration. But though the beauty of each is of a different species, they are similar to each other in humanity, benevolence, and sensibility to the misfortunes of others : all the time that can be spared from reading, and the necessary occupations of religion, duty, and society, is by each employed at embroidery, and other kinds of needlework, at which both have an unusual

unusual dexterity: by this a considerable saving is annually made, which, being augmented by the sums that each is able to spare, by abridging the number of their diversions, and avoiding many other frivolous expences, produces a considerable fund, which is employed in exercising the most amiable of all social virtues, that is, in relieving the sufferings of the honest, industrious poor.— For objects of their charitable benefactions, they have sought out indigent widows, mothers of young children, who have a just claim on the beneficence of others for that support which their parents cannot afford. Sophia has, at this time, seven of these pensioners, and Miss Conway five, who receive a weekly allowance, by which, and their own industry, they are able to support their numerous children. It was not till yesterday, (on which Sophia's weekly charity was distributed) that an accidental visit

made

made me acquainted with this new proof of her virtuous and amiable disposition; these gentle emanations of tender humanity are not only the most pleasing, but valuable of virtues, since the frequent opportunities of employing them, augment their utility. Might not those who keep a large retinue of useless attendants, derive more rational satisfaction from expending the money lavished on them, in supporting the aged and infirm, or the helpless infant; and those who can scarce move under the weight of costly apparel, experience the delight of an approving conscience, by sparing a part to cloath the needy and shivering poor? and might not those who are employed in visiting places, where few wish to see them, and whose lives are spent in a round of satiating amusements; (an emblem of Ixion's wheel) experience more pleasure in being beheld with gratitude and respect, by those

those whom their beneficence had raised from penury and distress? You will not be surprized, my dear brother, at these reflections, when you consider the amiable example that I have so frequently before me: in short, a virtuous passion, for a virtuous object has produced a sensible alteration in my disposition and pursuits. I now perceive the justice of your reproofs contained in your past letters, but flatter myself they will, hereafter, become unnecessary; as my former scenes of dissipation and pleasure are become tasteless and indifferent. To this let me add, that I have relinquished all intercourse with Miss Jackson, and if she has prudence enough to keep our transactions secret, as I certainly shall, I hope, what is passed may be of no detriment to her.

The frequency of my conversations with Miss Stanhope, has improved my
passion.

passion to a degree that it can receive no addition, but yet they have given me opportunities of observing many pleasing testimonies of her favourable partiality to me.—The passions carry with them such strong emotions, that they are with difficulty concealed ; and some of these I have discovered in Sophia, notwithstanding her solicitude to repress them : and though words can but imperfectly express the raptures I have felt at this discovery, it has, in no degree, encouraged me to assume a greater freedom and boldness in my behaviour towards her. The more sensible I am to the extent of her merit, the greater is my fear of losing her esteem, by some indiscreet or offensive action ; and my anxiety on this subject produces a cautious timidity in my behaviour, that is, in every respect, repugnant to that impertinent freedom and levity, with which I have before thought it al-

lowable

lowable to treat every woman, who appeared prepossessed in my favour.—To Miss Jackson I was a daring suitor; but pleasure and enjoyment were the objects of my pursuit. How different are my present sensations? How timid my hopes; how chaste my desires?—Immense in the difference between true love and that libidinous appetite that is often mistaken for it. My passion for Miss Stanhope aims at nothing but the honour and happiness of its object; nor did it ever suggest a desire, that, if revealed, could offend the purity and delicacy, even of her virtue. But, after all, I have not sufficient vanity to think myself deserving of her partiality; and yet it will necessarily animate me to attempt, by some expedient, to obviate the most considerable difficulty in my way. If ever this should be effected, I will then throw myself at her feet, and sollicit the blessing

CHARLES WENTWORTH. 211

blessing of an union, which alone can
make me happy.

I am,

With the most

perfect affection,

Dear brother,

your, &c.

London,
June 4, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

YOUR last letter, dear Charles, affords me very sensible pleasure, and has removed those fears which I had, till then, entertained on your behalf.—Love is a sentiment that can elevate as well as soften the soul, and incite it to the most virtuous actions, and is the surest preservative against every vicious or mean action; as we are never in love but with objects that appear amiable, and naturally endeavour to merit that return to our passions which we are ambitious to receive.

Reason is generally an unequal antagonist to passion, and it thence becomes the wisest way to oppose one passion by another, and combat the vicious

cious by the virtuous. *This is the oeconomy of morals*; and in this manner reason, assisted by love, will always be found sufficient to suppress every inclination to vice. May I not then presume to hope, that your passion for the amiable Miss Stanhope will, hereafter, secure the integrity of your morals, and preserve you in that happy disposition to which it has been the instrument of your restoration? How effectual is the influence of a virtuous woman in the reformation of a vicious lover? The instruction and example of an object beloved, are received with double pleasure, act with irresistible force, and produce the most happy and permanent effects.— Your errors, my brother, have had their source in your levity and inconsideration.—I know the humanity and benevolence of your disposition, and am certain that you cannot injure another without participating, on reflection, in those sufferings

you

you have occasioned : but the allurements of pleasure, co-operating with the natural violence of your passions, have hurried you into scenes of dissipation, and precluded you from thought and reflection : but these, I hope, you have now finally quitted ; and that in all your future pursuits you will believe, what the unerring precepts of experience have invariably taught in every age, that every pleasure that is repugnant to the dictates of reason, will be embittered by reflection ; and that the only road to happiness is through the temple of virtue.

I rejoice at your having, I hope, finally relinquished your intercourse with Miss Jackson.—The commission of one crime does not prohibit a return to virtue ; and she may yet be happy, if it can be kept secret, and she can refrain from recommencing those criminal pleasures with some other object : but this, I fear, will hardly

hardly be the case.—When the mind is once perverted by vice, it is difficult to restore and preserve it in the paths of virtue, at least, without the assistance of misfortunes. Should she unapply relapse, you will have been the instrument of her ruin.—But I will forbear reproofs, as, I hope, they will hereafter be unnecessary.

Though I heretofore blamed your precipitate attachment to Miss Stanhope, it was only because I feared you might embarrass yourself, by indulging a passion for an object whose superiority would naturally preclude a favourable return; but as you now appear to have some reason to hope that this will not be the case, I shall no longer condemn your partiality for a woman who is, in every respect, deserving, if I may credit your letters, and one which my mother, some time since, received from Mrs. Clinton. As I expect soon to see you in London, I shall

reserve

reserve many things on this and other subjects, for a verbal communication, and am, with the most perfect truth,

Dear Charles,

Your most faithful,

and most affectionate friend,

Cantab.
June 3, 1761.

EDWARD WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

AT your departure from hence, my dear brother, you left me happy in the prospect of being one day blest with the amiable Sophia, and in a state of apparent tranquility with Mr. S— and his family ; but this, however, is interrupted : the flames of dissension, which my submission had but smothered, are again rekindled. These daughters,—and *peevish old maids* ; who construe every thing into disrespect or ridicule, because they know they deserve it : hence they become too liberal in their impertinent observations, which officious friendship repeats, perhaps, with additions : this unprovoked ill treatment naturally meets with a similar return ; to revenge which, the mother and daughters teize Mr. S—

into the quarrel : from this source our disputes, by a natural progression, are arrived at their present height.

Mr. S——, last Monday, put into my hands a letter directed to my guardian, desiring me to read it, and return it him. In this letter he informed my uncle Wentworth, that, for some time past, he had suffered the greatest trouble and disquiet from my ill behaviour ; of which he had proposed acquainting him some months ago, but had deferred it on my promise of a reformation ; a promise which I had wholly disregarded. He then proceeded to enumerate the particulars of my misbehaviour. You must be sensible, my dear brother, that there are, in the conduct of every person, circumstances which a malicious disposition may misrepresent into faults. It is true, that before our late reconciliation, my indiscretion had given some cause of offence,

offence, but these I have wholly discarded since that time.

His principal allegations against me, were, that I had treated his family with disrespect; that I lived a life of irregularity, and neglected the studies and employment of the profession; with these, were enumerated a number of the most trifling charges, which had no other than an imaginary or malicious foundation, and which convinced me that the letter was intended to go no farther than myself: these complaints, however, he dignified with the epithet of *heavy* and *grievous*; and desired, as we could not live amicably together, that some means might be agreed to for a separation; offering to return a proper part of the premium which he had received, as a consideration for cancelling the indentures.

I retired to my chamber, after having perused the letter, and wrote an answer thereto, excusing, or denying every particular with which he had accused me; and promising to join my endeavours with his for effecting the desired separation. This I delivered, together with his own letter, into his hands; which having perused and considered, he called, and gently reprimanded me, for having the assurance to deny so many of the particulars which he had asserted; but, in the end offered, if I would promise amendment, to delay sending the letter: this was what I expected, and which I declined, perhaps imprudently; but my pride would not suffer me to descend to such unreasonable concessions, to appease the envy and malice of his antiquated daughters. He therefore found himself under a necessity of forwarding the letter, which he did (contrary to his former intention I am well convinced) inclosing

like-

likewise the answer I had written thereto. And yesterday he received a reply from my uncle Wentworth, acquainting him, that he was sorry for our disagreement; but could not determine concerning his proposal, until he had consulted my mother. The uneasiness I know she will suffer at this event, makes me almost repent my not having yielded to the concessions which Mr. S—— proposed. I am,

My dear brother,

your, &c.

London,
July 5, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

L 3. LETTER

LETTER. XXIX.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

SINCE my last my guardian has wrote to Mr. S—— on the subject of his letter, and consented to cancel the engagements relating to me, on terms which I think very reasonable, though they have been refused. I cannot, however, imagine Mr. S—— was ever in earnest in his proposal; though, I believe, he would willingly consent to a separation, but without returning any part of the premium; and fancy he hopes to drive me to this measure by ill treatment, as he has, within these few days, taken a very unusual and provoking method of mortifying my pride, by preferring the younger apprentices to the higher employments of the profession, which a long and universally established

custom

custom has invariably allotted to me. This is a piece of injustice, not a little irritating, and which I will not tamely bear. I yesterday received a letter from my dear mother, by which I find that she is, as I expected, not a little grieved at this event. To add to my unhappiness, the consequence of my intercourse with Miss Jackson is now become too apparent for longer concealment, and she is unfortunately ruined: her brother called on me yesterday with this disagreeable information, and proposed my attoning for the injury done his sister, by marriage; adding, that her parents were so irritated at her misconduct, that they threatened to abandon her, which he feared they really would do, unless I complied with this proposal; reproaching me also with having made him the instrument of his sister's ruin. I felt the force of this reproof, and was sensibly affected with the unhappy consequences of our criminal,

short-lived pleasures. But what could I do? What reparation could I make? Could I abandon Sophia? no; that is impossible. I therefore freely told him, that I was sincerely afflicted at this unfortunate event, and repented my indiscretion, and would gladly make any recompence in my power; but could not marry her, without rendering myself for ever miserable; that had this event happened before my connections with Miss Stanhope (with which I thought it necessary to acquaint him) I should, most certainly, have made his sister the reparation he desired; but that, in my present situation, it was impossible. This, however, was far from satisfying him; he said, that marriage was the only reparation which could be made, and that the reasons I had urged, were, by no means, sufficient to justify my refusal; and finding I gave no hopes of a compliance, he left me in anger, and with

threats

threats of revenge ; but without intimating the manner in which he proposed obtaining it.

I now perceive, by unhappy experience, the ill consequences resulting from the indulgence of criminal passions ; and though this experience cannot expiate the past, it will deter me from the future commission of similar offences, and engage me so to conduct myself hereafter, as will testify the reformation with which I am,

My dear brother,

your, &c.

London,
July 10, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH,

L 5.

LETTER XXX.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

HAD my misfortunes received no addition, yours which I have just received, * might have afforded me some consolation; but, alas! I am irreparably ruined.—To complete my misery, Sophia is lost irrecoverably; and, at a time, when I was anticipating, in imagination, the bliss I promised myself from a lasting union with her. How cruel is this reverse of fortune? and how severe is anguish after rapture? I will endeavour, as well as possible, to give you an account of this terrible addition to the

* This letter does not appear.

misfortunes which I enumerated in my last to you.

Happening yesterday to dine with some friends, I yielded to their solicitations, in hopes of dissipating my melancholy, and drank until I was (what I rarely am) *disguised*; as were also my companions. In this state we madly resolved on going to *Vauxhall* gardens, where we had not long been, before I observed Sophia, her mother, Miss Conway, and a gentleman, whom I never before had seen: instead of avoiding them (as prudence would naturally have directed me in this situation) I had the indiscretion to join them; but how was I confounded, when Sophia told me, with an air of displeasure, that they were particularly engaged, and that she must deny herself the pleasure of my company for that evening! I imagined that she perceived my situation, as indeed she did, and retired, ashamed of my folly; to ex-

cuse which, I this morning waited on her, and was admitted to her dressing-room, where I found her alone. "Dear Sophia, said I, on entering, the shame of my last night's indiscretion has brought me hither to apologize for my weakness, in yielding to a vice for which I really entertain an aversion; and to which I had not yesterday yielded, but for unusual temptations." "Sir, replied she, you have taken a very unnecessary trouble, I require no account of the actions of a person in whose conduct I think myself no ways interested." "And are you then, Sophia, said I, irreconcilably offended at a fault, which, in the circumstances in which I yesterday found myself, was almost inevitable." I little suspected that she had any other motive for her reply; my error soon became apparent. "Here, Sir, said she, is a letter which has some relation to you, and which you may read if you please; I shall soon return." I

received

received the letter, which I eagerly opened, and, with confusion, found it nearly as follows, viz.

To Miss SOPHIA STANHOPE.

MADAM,

Y O U will, I hope, pardon the liberty I take in addressing myself to you, to whom I have not the honour of being known, when I tell you it is on a subject of the utmost importance to my future happiness.

I am the daughter of reputable parents in — Street; and by the introduction of my brother, a few months since, became, unhappily, acquainted with Mr. Wentworth, who had address enough, under the sanction of honourable professions, to engage my affections; and afterwards improved the advantages which an unhappy opportunity gave him, and by

a profusion of oaths and solemn promises of marriage, and (as I have the strongest reason to believe) the assistance of *medicinal potions* (with shame I confess it) prevailed on me to yield to a fatal act; the consequences of which can be no longer concealed, and which threaten me with, wretchedness and misery, that can only be prevented by his making me his wife. This my brother, yesterday, proposed to him, but he declined it on account of his passion for you; and, I believe, that had he no hopes of success from you, he might be induced to a compliance with that proposal; which would prevent the misery with which I am threatened, from the censures of a malicious world, and the anger of my afflicted parents, already threatening me to withdraw their protection from me. I flatter myself, Madam, that your humanity will not suffer you to become the author of my misery,

by

by continuing an obstacle to Mr. Wentworth's making me that reparation to which he is obliged by justice, and the most solemn promises. But if the consideration of my misfortunes is not sufficient, your own interest ought to engage you to discard him, since his present life is of the most debauched and vicious kind, and he is abandoned to every criminal indulgence which his passions can suggest; and was it not for fear of offending you, I would suppose, that it is neither impossible, or inconsistent with his presumption, to aspire to designs not the most honourable, even to you.

I am your most humble,

most devoted, and unhappy servant,

—Street,
July 15, 1761.

LUCINDA JACKSON.

Words cannot express my surprize at the positive falsehoods asserted in this letter. You know, my brother, I have never concealed any of my faults from you; and, I solemnly declare, that neither before, or after my intercourse with Miss Jackson, I ever once made any promises which could be construed into an engagement of marriage; and as for the artificial means she accuses me of using, God knows, I never imagined, much less executed, so detestable a design. The pity I before entertained for her misfortunes, now gave place to contempt and resentment for the baseness of her malice and falsehood; but my reflections thereon were soon interrupted by the return of Sophia. "Well, Sir, says she, do you know the lady who pretends to this intimate acquaintance with you?" "I confess, said I, Sophia, with shame, that I have been guilty of the intercourse which she mentions; but

that

that I ever used any of those unnatural means with which she charges me, or ever promised her marriage to engage her to it is false, by every thing sacred." "O, Sir, said she, do not swear, for I have been taught to believe, that oaths often confirm falsehood : I have sent to enquire concerning Miss Jackson, and find her to be what she pretends ; and it is natural to believe, that you have seduced her by promises of marriage, the base, though common, practice of your sex. I shall determine nothing concerning your having used those vile, artificial means she suspects ; your profession, however, renders it not improbable. As to the vices and irregularities with which she charges you, they are evident, not only from your commerce with her, but from the condition in which I last night saw you ; and as I once esteemed you for virtues, of which you had but the shadow, I must now discard you for vices of which you

possess

possess the reality: and let me recommend it to you, to make Miss Jackson that reparation which your engagements, and the injury you have done her, require. When you shall have done this, and shall have discarded your vices, and converted your good qualities to laudable purposes, I shall then be glad of your acquaintance as a friend, though I shall never hereafter think of you as a lover: and, until then, must suspend our acquaintance. This, Sir, said she, is a resolution which I have deliberately taken, and to which I shall unalterably adhere." Heavens! how was I confounded at my doom, which the emphasis and air with which it was delivered, convinced me it was irrevocable. I stood confused and irresolute, without knowing what to reply; which she observed, and, doubtless, attributed to conscious guilt, and thereupon offered to retire. I conjured her to stay and hear my vindication.—

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She stopped. — “ I am sensible, said I, Miss Stanhope, that appearances are strongly against me ; and that Miss Jackson has urged many artful, though false, allegations, in support of her accusations ; and I will freely confess, that before I saw you, I was engaged in some irregularities, as well as an intercourse, with her ; but, since that moment, I have wholly abandoned the one and the other ; and you have made me a sincere convert to virtue : and for any dishonourable intentions towards you, as she basely insinuates, God knows, I never thought of you but with the most virtuous love and admiration.” “ Sir, says she, I fancy you are repeating your former protestations to Miss Jackson. But it matters little what your intentions towards me have been : there is no other way of changing my determination but by proving your innocence ; and as that is, I fear, impossible,

ble, I would gladly save you the trouble of making, and myself the pain of hearing an insufficient justification, and must therefore retire." Which she did, leaving me in a state, easier to be conceived, than described;

*Multa metu cunctantem & multa parantem
dicere.* Virg.

I left the house soon after; and, hurrying home, wrote her a letter in the most pathetic stile which grief and despair could dictate; faithfully relating every particular of my conduct in this affair, which was consistent with decency; the truth of which I asserted in the most solemn manner, and imprecated all the vengeance of Heaven upon myself, if I had therein advanced a single falsehood. Such a solemn and awful confirmation, I flattered myself, would procure my assertions the credit which they

justly

justly deserve ; but she, cruelly, returned my letter unopened ; and I have now no remains of hope : even that poor solace of the wretched is denied me. —How sudden is this transition from those visionary scenes of felicity, which, but a few days since, filled my deluded imagination ; and how unhappy is the man who finds his hopes of future prosperity on the fallacious appearances of the present hour ! never did adverse fortune appear more distant ! never did I form more flattering hopes of happiness.

This misfortune is the consequence of that false, malicious letter of Miss Jackson's ; how could she descend to the commission of so base an action ? but the stile and diction are the product of a more artful hand. Her parents have, indeed, bestowed a profu-

sion

sion of care and expence in ornamenting her person, and improving her natural vanity ; but her mind has received but little cultivation. This therefore must have been the artifice of her brother ; and this is the revenge he threatened.—Coward ! could he not have demanded a more honourable satisfaction ?

To this I must add, that the irritating treatment I daily receive from Mr. S— and his family would be insupportable, was not the sense of it drowned in this greater misfortune.—O, my brother, how shall I express the extent of my present affliction ? it is insupportable ! something must be done. But I am irresolute.—A thousand schemes revolve in my imagination, and some of them bold and enterprizing.—Agitated by despair, I know not

CHARLES WENTWORTH. 239

not what I shall resolve ; but if you have any means of consolation in store, administer them as soon as possible to

Your most afflicted,

unhappy brother,

London,
July 16, 1761.

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

To Mr. CHARLES WENTWORTH.

I PARTICIPATE with you, dear Charles, in your afflictions, but know not how to administer that consolation you require. Sympathetic condolance rather inflames, than sooths our grief; dissipation of mind, and length of time, says my lord Bolingbroke *, are the remedies to which the greatest part of mankind trust in their afflictions; but the first of these has but a temporary, and the second but a slow effect; and both are unworthy of a wise man. Shall we fly from ourselves that we may escape our misfortunes, or wait to be happy, till we forget our misery, and owe to

* Reflections on exile.

the

the weakness of our faculties a tranquillity which ought to be the effect of their strength? Do you, my brother, act a more prudent and manly part; and owe your consolation in adversity to the exercise of your reason. Consider that *events which have the appearance of misfortunes often prove a happy source of future felicity*: this consideration alone should enable you to support affliction with calmness and fortitude: it partakes of impiety to complain of dispensations, which are the effects of that Divine Wisdom that directs every event to a wise and happy end. As oft as we are oppressed by evils resulting either from our own mismanagement, unexpected accidents, or the inscrutable views of Providence, our business is to suffer with decency, and our duty to improve by suffering. Dispose your mind, therefore, to bear adversity, and you will alleviate its burthen; the good or bad events of life are felt according to our

own, not their qualities ; they being in themselves indifferent, and common accidents, which acquire their influence only by our own weakness ; as fortune itself can dispense neither happiness or misery, unless we co-operate with her endeavours ; but your impetuosity of temper, impatience of opposition, natural pride and ambition, but ill agree with that disposition I have now recommended. I must, however, tell you that you are too sensibly affected by your situation, which is, indeed, disagreeable ; but time and prudence, on your part, will naturally remedy it ; and, perhaps, these accidents may prove the most fortunate incidents of your life, by giving a new turn to your disposition. You have hitherto been in danger from too much vivacity, which this disappointment may check. Affliction is often our best friend, and its awful lessons are never so necessary as in youth. We set out

in life, ardent with the hope of attaining happiness, but pursue a wrong path, as we seek it in diversions and sensual pleasures. Happy they, who by afflictions, are called off to a more rational course !

I cannot but admire the conduct of Miss Stanhope, which was truly amiable ; and though I do not doubt the truth of what you assert in your justification, yet appearances are very unfavourable on your part, and not to have done as she did would have been a fault. *Would all the sex imitate her example in discouraging vice, they would prove the most powerful reformers of a vicious age.* But how different is the conduct of the greatest part of the female sex, who, instead of discountenancing, in effect encourage and promote libertinism ? How many are there who, with pleasure, converse with those men who behave with open rudeness, who

avowedly laugh at virtue, and plead for vice, whose time is passed in scenes of irregularity, whose connections are of the most dishonourable kind, and who are known to be the smiling foes of female virtue? How many are there, even ladies of character and reputation, who encourage the acquaintance of men who are known to associate with common prostitution; and thereby insult the laws of virtue, delicacy, and decorum, openly countenance vice, and with their own hands destroy the only partition that separates them from the most profligate of their sex: and how many are there who esteem themselves happy in the addresses of a man who has ensnared beauty, who has betrayed innocence, and abandoned it to want and despair, and who pique themselves on captivating the heart which has triumphed over others; and fondly admit to their own embraces the dear deceiver, who has had the art and ad-

dress

dress to seduce and betray inexperienced beauty, and destroy the happiness and reputation of families ; thus recommending themselves by that very conduct which ought to render them objects of their detestation ? — But these, my brother, are reflections which naturally occurred to my mind, and which are not intended as reproofs to you ; these would now be unseasonable. It may, perhaps, hereafter be in your power to convince Miss Stanhope of your innocence in those particulars which are most to your disadvantage ; which (if your future conduct is regular and discreet) will restore you to her esteem.

The allegations of Miss Jackson are calculated to palliate her misconduct, of which you have been the author, and of which you have therefore less right to complain. You seem justly sensible, my dear brother, of the baseness of recurring to

medicinal stimulants to excite libidinous passions; but the crime is not less (notwithstanding the force of custom to the contrary) if this effect is produced by the arts of address and deception. In the former case the effects are less pernicious, since the body only is debauched, while the mind is unconsenting, and consequently unpolluted.

You shock me, my brother, with the mention of what you term an honourable satisfaction. Can it be called a satisfaction unnecessarily to deprive yourself, or another, of life. I would gladly avoid reproofs whilst you are in adversity; but the marks which you betray of rashness and indiscretion, convince me of their necessity, at least, on this particular.—And would you, Charles, if this satisfaction had been demanded, have weakly complied with a criminal custom, which derives its origin from barbarity, and owes its

its support to cowardice, to want of resolution to obey the dictates of reason and virtue, in preference to those which every one know are falsely and absurdly called, honour? I fear you would; but duelling is a crime which you have, in particular, abundant cause to abhor. The recent, melancholly, and untimely death of the best of fathers and friends, and the irreparable loss which in him we have sustained, by his yielding to a measure almost inevitable to those of his profession, ought, I think, to teach you wisdom in this particular. What daring impiety is it in men, who are accountable for their beings to that God who gave them, unnecessarily to risk their own, or destroy the lives of others, to decide the most trifling affairs, and this too by a decision which is determined wholly by art, or chance; and that because they have not the courage to sustain the imputation of want of courage. *No! rather than dare to act*

virtuously, and counteract a barbarous custom, they will dare offend their God, and violate the laws of society, and the principles of reason and justice. Slavish cowardice to custom, but impious boldness to Heaven: what horrid absurdity! That man, my brother, who kills his antagonist in a duel, will be, in the judgment of Heaven, a murderer; and the man who is killed will be deemed accessory to his own unrepented, and (fearful thought!) unpardoned murder. We have, however, happily sufficient reason to form better hopes of the fate of our father, from his behaviour on that unhappy occasion, the pains he took to avoid it, and the respite he afterwards enjoyed to prepare for a future state. — It is a solemn truth that even “virtue which costs existence, is a crime, a bold violation of Heaven’s laws, and a black suicide.” How much more aggravated then must be the crime of him, who for

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a trivial, inconsiderable dispute, rashly abridges his own, or antagonist's life, and thereby frustrates the end of his creation ! Those, among the Greeks and Romans, who carried their ideas of right over their own lives, to a length which the Christian abhors, yet never attempted to abridge the term of existence, until oppressed with insupportable misfortunes ; they could no longer consider life as a blessing, or preserve it but with misery. But our men of honour, though better instructed, have less virtue, and, to revenge a trifling affront, dare violate the precepts of religion, and the laws of society, but dare not oppose an inhuman custom, derived from Gothic barbarism. Wretched prejudice ! at once deserving pity and contempt. Can we be disgraced or degraded by the outrage of violence or phrenzy ? can the false imputations of brutal arrogance detract from our truth or probity ? or the fault

of another contaminate our honour ? or is there any species of honour that is repugnant to virtue ? Despicable absurdity ! You, my brother, profess, at least, to believe a state of future retribution, answer me then, if you should be killed in a duel, what would be the punishment for a crime of the most atrocious nature, that bids defiance to the Creator by ungratefully disowning a blessing in mercy bestowed, and prematurely rushing into the presence of an offended God ? or should you rather be successful and kill your antagonist, what degree of happiness could you afterwards find compatible with the sensations of a *murderer* ? I have never seen one person able to justify the practice of duelling, and yet few have sufficient fortitude to resolve against complying with it, so long as custom requires it ; they will own the custom to be immoral and absurd, but dare not deviate from it, through fear of incurring

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the imputation of cowardice. Can any thing be more cowardly, or inconsistent? —For my part, I am resolved, in every circumstance of life, to govern my conduct, by the precepts of religion and virtue, as far as the imbecility of my reason will permit; and, if I do this, I shall not fear any censures for non-compliance with this impious custom.—The man whose life is uniformly virtuous, will be in no danger of the imputation of cowardice for abstaining from murder.—But he who is not invariably restrained by the fear of evil, will hardly be thought to refuse a challenge from moral restraints; since his virtue is more than suspicious, whose conscientious scruples accompany only those sins that are attended with danger.—You will, perhaps, ask how an affront is to be resented? not by a method that is uninfluenced by justice.—*A man who by his misconduct has deserved an affront, has no right to resent it; and he who is base enough to*

affront another without cause, is unworthy of any thing but contempt; which, was it duly bestowed on these occasions, by the reputable part of mankind, would prove abundantly sufficient to repress insolence and ill manners: nor have cowardice or effeminacy dictated this reflection.—Those who are most forward in giving offence, are worthless wretches, that endeavour to silence the contempt they are conscious of meriting, by a fashionable crime, or affair of honour, and make one painful effort to evince their courage, thereby to secure their cowardice from future detection.

Your unhappy disputes with Mr. S—, I perceive, from your own relation, are, in a great measure, the effect of your unreasonable pride; which, I fear, will produce unhappy consequences.—I shall consult our uncle Wentworth on this subject; and, in the interim, hope you

CHARLES WENTWORTH. 253

you will make yourself as happy as possible, and believe me to be, dear Charles,

Your most affectionate

and most devoted brother,

Cambridge,
July 20, 1761.

EDWARD WENTWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

To Mr. EDWARD WENTWORTH.

On board ship—In the Downs, Aug. 4, 1761.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

HOW great will be your surprize at observing the place from which this is dated, and to which I come pursuant to a resolution I have taken of quitting my native country, and the misfortunes which oppressed me therein.—By my last you might have perceived that some enterprizing design was in agitation, which has been since resolved on, and is now in execution.

When my unhappy situation had drove me to this resolution, the rashness of which I know you will condemn, I found it necessary to obtain Mr. S—'s consent to this

mea-

measure, that, through his means, I might procure such testimonials of my proficiency in surgery, as were requisite for the success of my enterprize. In effecting this, there would have been no difficulty, could I but have obtained my guardian's approbation to my design; without which, I knew it would be impossible, though it was indispensably necessary, either in reality, or appearance: an innocent deception has obtained the latter, without injury to any person, except myself.

Soon after my last to you, I gave out that I intended making a voyage to America, and that I had acquainted my guardian with my design; at the same time I wrote a letter in his name and hand, as nearly as I could imitate it, and directed it to myself: in this letter I made my uncle tell me that he had consulted my mother, relative to my proposal of going to America; and that as she found

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no appearance of an accommodation between Mr. S— and myself, and could not flatter herself with the hopes of my making any improvement in my profession, whilst those unhappy differences subsisted ; she had consented to it in hopes of its producing happy effects, by separating me from my vicious companions, and the temptations which surrounded me ; from which she dreaded more unhappy consequences. I then made him add, that as she had given her consent to my design, he should not oppose it, provided Mr. S—'s approbation could be obtained ; in which case it would be requisite for me to visit him in a few days. This letter I inclosed to a friend at W—, after having sealed it, &c. and desired him to put it into the Post-office at that place, to answer a private, but useful purpose. This he did ; and, in a day or two, the postman delivered me the letter in Mr. S—'s presence, which, after having read,

I im-

I immediately put into his hands. He appeared somewhat surprized at its contents, but did not doubt its authenticity. The manner of its delivery, the W—r post-mark, &c. were sufficient to remove every suspicion of that nature: he therefore replied, that as my mamma and guardian had consented to this measure, he would grant his permission, though he could not think it would be for my advantage; neither did he think (as he afterwards confessed) that it would ever have been executed, or that a fond mother would finally yield to a step of this nature. A few days after I set out on my pretended visit to my uncle, without intending to see him; however, at my departure, Mr. S— delivered me a letter for him, which I found it requisite to open, as I expected it might require an answer. On examining the contents, I had reason to think it very lucky that he had confided it to my care, since, had it

been

been delivered, my design must have been disappointed. In this letter Mr. S— informed my uncle with his having seen the letter with which I have already given you an account ; and that he freely consented to the step proposed, but thought it might be proper before my departure to cancel the indentures, subsisting ; in doing which, he would comply with any reasonable terms, &c. This rendered it necessary to continue my journey to W—r, contrary to my first intention ; thus one piece of deception involved me in the necessity of practising a second ; this is ever the case. I excused my journey to my uncle on my arrival, by pretending to want his advice, relative to my differences with Mr. S—, an excuse which served my purpose. The only difficulty remaining, was that of procuring the indentures, without which, I feared the deception might be suspected, and more particu-
larly

larly enquired into. I knew the desk in which I had before seen them deposited, and where I had no doubt of their still remaining. I examined the size and form of the key belonging to it, which I had fortunately an opportunity of seeing, and procured several others of its kind of different sizes. I then informed the family that I expected to have occasion to tarry out until late at night, and would save the servants the trouble of sitting up for me, if they would give me the key of the door; this they did, and I returned, at a late hour, and entered the room in which the desk stood, with fear and trembling, lest I should have been discovered in an act which would have had the most criminal appearances, though the intention was very excusable; the key happily fitted, and I found the paper, re-locked the desk, and retired to my bed. The next morning I set out on my return to town, and

by

by the way answered Mr. S—'s letter, in the name of my uncle, telling him, that he agreed to his proposal of cancelling the indentures, which he had for that purpose put into my hands, to whom he might pay what part of the premium was proper to be refunded; which he submitted to his generosity; desiring likewise that he would grant me as favourable recommendations as he could, consistent with truth. This letter I delivered to Mr. S—— on my return, and, to prevent any doubt of its being genuine, I produced the indentures, telling him for what purpose I had received it: this precaution effectually secured me on that particular. Mr. S—— now found that I was resolved, at all events, to pursue my voyage; and therefore declined annulling the indentures, or repaying any part of the premium, which doubtless he judged, might be as well saved. He, however, joined with the surgeons of

of —— Hospital, which I have constantly attended; in recommendatory testimonials, which will be amply sufficient to procure me an advantageous employment in the place to which I am destined. I have likewise had the precaution of procuring letters of recommendation from persons of consideration; and, to avoid the expence of passage, &c. and save what money I have (about thirty guineas). I have undertaken to officiate in quality of surgeon to the ship on board which I now am; and which, before your receiving this, will, probably, convey me beyond the sight of my native land. What anxious moments have intervened since my undertaking the execution of this enterprize; and how much have I suffered from the fear of its being prevented by an untimely discovery, and myself exposed to the shame of detection. That is now past; but my anxiety remains. Uncertainty, as to the event of my rash design; the sorrow I know it will occasion

my

my friends ; the grief of leaving my native country, yourself, my dear mother, and Sophia, together with the hardships and dangers I must expect to encounter during my peregrination in a distant land, all conspire to increase my anxiety ; but

“ Tentanda via est qua me quoque possum
“ Tollere humo.” ————— Virg.

— What will my dear parent think of this inconsiderate step ; how will it afflict her ? Distracting thought ! I dare not even write to her, and must leave to you the task of pleading in my behalf.

— I know that success justifies every enterprize ; and should those active endeavours, which I am resolved to exert with unremitting zeal, in a country where industry and application are encouraged with the greatest rewards, render mine successful (and the hope of this is my only consolation) I shall, hereafter, return with honour and satisfaction. But should

a contrary event ensue ; pride will compel me to deny myself the happiness of ever revisiting that country, or those friends, I now leave.—Our anchor is now weighing.—O Sophia !—I have written to her ;—but she is for ever lost.—I must now, dear brother, bid you a long, but, I hope, not a final adieu !—When I shall again write to you is uncertain.—It will not, however, be till I can give you such an account of my success, as will justify the enterprize I have undertaken.—In the unhappy interim believe me to be

Your most unfortunate,
but ever affectionate brother,

CHARLES WENTWORTH.

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